The Military Campaigns of the Axis Against Greece
Greece Observed 1940-1941

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Submitted by:
Evangelos Ilias-Tembos
B.A.(History)
M.A.(International Studies-Defence)

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Some historians might argue that the German attack on Greece was not unprovoked, on the basis that Greece might have joined the Allies’ war against the Axis earlier, if she had been given all the necessary military equipment to fight. It seems hard to sustain this argument, since it implies that a mere possibility of Greece joining the Allies in circumstances which did not in fact arise would constitute a provocation. Even this leaves out of account the question of justification. Apart from that, Germany had decided to attack Greece, anyway, in December 1940. So even if Greece had been given all the military equipment she needed to sustain her fight against the Axis, which she was not, Germany had planned the attack on her before any British troops ever landed on Greek soil to fight the Germans. The landing of British troops in Greece took place as a direct response to the German crossing of the Danube into Bulgaria. Let us not forget that Bulgaria joined the Axis on 1st March and allowed German troops in her territory, and that only later did British troops start to arrive in Greece. As Metaxas had said to the German Minister in Athens in December 1940, Greece was not hostile to Germany, as long as Germany was not hostile to Greece. Further evidence of Metaxas’s unthreatening attitude towards Germany is the fact that Metaxas did not allow British planes in Salonika, during the Italo-Greek war in Albania, fearing to provoke Germany.

6a) The Metaxas Line

Before we consider the actual fighting between Greek and German forces in the first phase of the German invasion, let us examine the construction of the fortresses in the Metaxas Line. The Metaxas Line was the pride of the Greek General
Staff. It was named after the Greek Premier, under whose guidance and personal zeal it was constructed and almost completed. However it is mostly called the Metaxas Line by foreigners and not by Greeks. The Greeks simply refer to it as the fortified line or the fortresses. It was a line similar to the French Maginot line or the German West Wall. As has been noted in a previous chapter, prior to the Italian landing in Albania in 1939, the Greek General Staff had decided to concentrate all its efforts and funds in Eastern Macedonia, since Bulgaria was considered the only possible strong enemy of Greece. The Metaxas Line was a series of permanent and semi-permanent bunkers along the Greco-Bulgarian frontier, made out of reinforced concrete material and supported by a number of anti-tank ditches, minefields, look out posts, anti-aircraft emplacements, trenches, machine-gun positions, artillery positions etc. Altogether, there were 21 forts surrounded by further strongpoints and fieldworks.

The construction of the Metaxas Line started in June 1936 and by April 1941 all the forts but four had been more or less completed. The original estimate for the cost of that work amounted to 6 billion drachmas (£16m according to the 1937 currency rate). But with the simultaneous upgrading of the road, rail and waterway network in Eastern Macedonia and the servicing of the existing ones the total sum rose to the staggering figure of 1,457,975,336 drachmas. For instance 174.32 km of new roads were made and 83.7 km of old ones were serviced and improved. There was criticism of the magnitude of the whole line and of its overall cost, since the money allotted to it could be raised only at the expense of other vital governmental defence projects and developments. See Maps 10,11,14.

The question is why such large scale works had been constructed on the north-eastern border of Greece, just to stop Bulgaria, even if Greece was to fight on her own. Taking into account its strength and nature, it can be concluded that even though the fortresses were drained of equipment and
men, to sustain the Albanian campaign, the few remaining soldiers and material were able to hold an even stronger enemy than Bulgaria, Germany. As we shall see later on, the Germans did not pierce it; some forts capitulated, but on the whole the line remained intact. If we take into account that in a possible war with Bulgaria, Greece would probably have had the assistance of Turkey and Yugoslavia, under existing agreements, it is beyond logic that such huge works should have been undertaken just to curtail the enemy. The reason lies probably in two facts: first that the Greek General Staff was immensely influenced by the Maginot Line and the French ideas about static land warfare as in the First World War (3); and second, that the Greek General Staff must have been fairly well informed that though allied with Greece, neither Yugoslavia nor Turkey would assist her in a possible war with Bulgaria. Concerning the first fact, the Greek General Staff was mistaken - as it was to be proven later on - since the French ideas about static warfare were not useful when fighting the German army in the Second World War. As far as the second fact is concerned, the Greek General Staff was correct.

Similarly Katheniotis points out, that though the line was so well constructed and equipped, still no attempt was made to fortify the west of it, which was, as explained in chapter 4, its weakest spot. First of all, the western part of the Metaxas Line, the Axios river valley was not in the operational zone of the Eastern Macedonian Army (E.M.A.) when the Italo-Greek war broke out. It was under the jurisdiction of the General Staff itself. Therefore, the E.M.A. had no authority over whether to fortify the Axios zone or not. The General Staff ordered E.M.A. to study the construction of works in the Mount Menikion, Mount Pageon, Mount Beles and River Struma areas, but not in the Axios river valley.

However, the E.M.A. on its own initiative and without any order from Athens, proceeded with the construction of small scale defence works in the Axios valley. Only in January
1941 and as a result of the possible German attack on Greece, did the General Staff decide to tackle the subject of field works in the Axios zone, with the establishment of anti-tank ditches and obstacles, minefields, trenches, artillery and mortar positions etc. The time from January to April 1941 was obviously very limited to construct broad and strong works in the Axios zone. Even so, by April 1941, 143 concrete positions had been constructed. (4)

On the other hand, congratulatory comments on the Metaxas Line came from the opposite side, from the Germans. In June 1941, a German delegation decided to visit the Greek installations in Macedonia including the Metaxas Line. The Germans were surprised by the nature of the constructions and their design. Among their favourable comments, the Germans admired the personnel quarters. They said that the Metaxas Line was the golden mean between the Maginot and other defence lines. The former was characterized by an over-abundance of welfare facilities for the troops and as a result less space was allotted for storing equipment and material, while other defence lines had less living space for their men and more for the works and the defence obstacles. Only the Metaxas Line had a reasonable balance between personnel and guns. (5)

The Germans praised the camouflage which was superb. In many cases, German infantry had to march right up to a machine-gun emplacement to discover it, and by that time, most of them had been killed. The concealment of all the field works from ground and air reconnaissance was beyond any praise. The German delegation was even more surprised when it was informed that the Metaxas Line could be equipped with more than one type of weapons, for example, field and mountain artillery, and often with two or three types at the same time. Above all, the Germans said that the Bulgarian espionage had failed throughout, since they had no intelligence whatsoever about the line. They concluded that
the Bulgarians would never have managed to break through it, if they had attacked it. (6)

They pointed out, however, the lack of heavy guns. Almost all heavy guns, anti-tank guns, anti-aircraft guns and mortars had been moved to Albania. Consequently, most of the forts were caught 'naked' when the Germans invaded Greece. The lack of artillery and anti-aircraft guns placed the men of the Metaxas Line in a desperate position, incapable of defending themselves. The Greek infantry, too, lacked mortars to defend the forts. (7)

A very characteristic example of the inadequacy of the Greek line in anti-aircraft guns, was the fact that the Germans had hoisted a balloon to spot for their artillery against the Greek positions and there was not a single plane or gun to shoot it down. (8) Another disadvantage of the Metaxas Line was that it was extremely close to the Bulgarian borders enabling the Germans to use flat trajectory guns directly against the gun embrasures of the Greek forts. Additionally, the Greek troops were unable to fall back and manoeuvre, as required, since there was no depth in their position, owing to the construction of the line on the steep slopes of the Mount Beles. (9)

6b) The Morphology of the Terrain

The Metaxas Line forts extended from the east of the River Axios to the western bank of the River Nestos. The line was protected by the Beles and Tsingeli mountains, the high plateau of Nevrokopi and the area of Volakos which lay on the slopes of Boz Pag. The line was extended in 1939 towards the east, to cover the west bank of the Nestos from Paranesti to the mouth of the river and to the west from Lake Doiran towards the west bank of the Axios. See Maps 10,11,14

Some additional works were constructed in the area of Krusia but they were not so strong. The operational theatre
of Eastern Macedonia extended from the Axios to the Nestos. This area is covered by high mountains on an undulating line with a sequence of river basins between. Communications and transport in the area are difficult apart from in the river basins which are however surrounded in mountains. The impending battle was to take place in high mountains extending on two lines from the east to the south. The northern line, run from the basins of the River Struma through Kapnotopi, Ahdadohori, Akrinos and Kato Nevrokopi to Volakos. The southern line was from Mousthemi through Eleutheroupolis to Chrysoupolis; in the river basins on the southern line lay the vast plains of Serres and Drama. (10)

6c) The Aliakmon position

The Aliakmon line in Central Macedonia started from the Greco-Yugoslavian border on Mount Kaimaktsalan and ran to the River Aliakmon. The aim of this second line was to cover Central and Southern Greece from a German advance to the south, if the Metaxas Line was destroyed or outflanked. This line having as strongholds Mounts Vermion, Olympus, Pierion and Kaimaktsalan, was a naturally fortified line. However, there were major roads in between these mountains which led to the south of the country and could be exploited by mechanised units. The line's weakest point was in the northwest, where it could be turned, if the enemy operated from Monastir through its valley corridor to Florina. It was a natural anti-tank line, with the exception of the coastal part of it but it was hastily manned and semi-fortified, altogether lacking any substantial strength when compared to the Metaxas Line. (11) See Maps 10,11,13

6d) The Allied Strategic Dispositions and Operational Plan
The Allied strategic dispositions to meet the German attack were as follows: in the sector of Eastern Macedonia and under the jurisdiction of the Eastern Macedonian Army, (E.M.A.) there were the VII, XIV, and XVIII Infantry Divisions and the Nestos Infantry Brigade plus the Metaxas Line troops (around 10,000 men). In Western Thrace, there was the Evros Infantry Brigade with seven companies and in Kilkis the only "motorized" Greek division, even in limited strength, the XIX. With the exception of the XIX Motorized Division, the rest of the forces (not including the Metaxas Line troops) amounted around 30 infantry battalions.

In addition to the above, the E.M.A. had 20 companies of border troops and 900 machine-guns emplaced on the Metaxas Line. It was supported by 4 mountain artillery batteries of 75mm, 2 of Skoda 75mm guns, 3½ of 65mm, 15 field artillery batteries of 75mm, 7 heavy batteries (85mm and 155mm), 32 fixed gun positions and a force of mountain artillery with 19 guns of 105mm. The Metaxas Line did not have not even a single aircraft under its command. In the Metaxas Line, each artillery piece had no more than 150 shells and each mortar 300-400 shells. The forts had 1000 shells, when they should have had at least double that number. The mortars in some forts ran out of shells on the second day of the fighting and the machine-guns too had in some cases, fired half of what they had by then.(12)

The forces in the Metaxas Line were very weak indeed. During the months of the Italo-Greek conflict, while the Bulgarian theatre was at peace, the Greek High Command had drained most of the forces from Eastern Macedonia to support the Greek army in Albania. Of the usual strength in Eastern Macedonia of 6 infantry divisions (VI, VII, XII, XIII, XIV, and XVII), with the XVI Infantry Brigade and the V Infantry Division in reserve, the XVII, XIII and V Infantry Divisions and the XVI Infantry Brigade had been despatched to the Albanian front. Moreover, most of the equipment of the E.M.A. was sent to Albania leaving only scanty forces and
even scantier material to equip the Metaxas Line and defend Eastern Macedonia. (13) See Maps 10, 11, 14, 17

Most of the battalions in the E.M.A. had at the best no more than 500 men each, as opposed to their normal establishment of some 800. Most of the officers in the E.M.A. were inexperienced simply because most of the experienced ones had been sent to Albania. The forces were almost completely lacking in anti-aircraft guns. They had around 30 light ones (20mm and 37mm) and one 40mm, but only 3 of 88mm. In the Axios valley, where they should have had 30 field anti-tank guns, there were only 13, captured from the Italians with very few shells. There were few means of transportation and even fewer means of communication even with the improvement described above. In one sector, lack of a telephone connection meant that the sector commander communicated with the rest of his forces by a mounted messenger who had to make a six hours ride. (14)

In addition to the above, the length of the whole front being around 250 km meant that these already depleted Greek forces had to be very thinly stretched in order to cover most of it, with no possibility of co-ordination and no reserves. The XIX so-called "motorized" Division was anything but that. It comprised the 191st, 192st and 193st Infantry Regiments which had a number of Bren carriers, motor-cycles, small cars, lorries, trucks, captured Italian tanks and Dutch tanks, amounting altogether to around 24 light tanks. The division also possessed 123 machine-guns, 78 of them light, 30 mortars, 22 anti-tank guns and one field and one mountain battery. Overall it was short of around 150 vehicles. Its three regiments were inexperienced in battle and untrained to man the tanks, simply because until 1940 the Greek army had not possessed any. The regiments were even dispersed from each other over a wide area, as if its disadvantages and its ineffectiveness were not enough already. (15)
In Central Macedonia was the Central Macedonian Army (C.M.A) which comprised the B.E.F., made up of the forces mentioned in the previous chapter, and in addition the Greek XII and XX Infantry Divisions and the border troops of Sector X. Those Greek formations were even less equipped and battle-worthy than those of the E.M.A. Most of their troops had been recruited in February and March 1941 from other dissolved units. Owing to their late call up, the men were almost totally untrained, most of their officers were sent to Albania, and their equipment was scarce and out of date. The formations had very little transport or communications equipment. The XII Infantry Division had only six gun batteries, two machine-gun companies and three mountain batteries, the XX the same structure but no artillery pieces at all. Until 8th April, almost 100 men in each battalion of the XII were unarmed. The Greek forces in Central Macedonia were third class troops. See Maps 10,11,13,17

As the British War Office report says, the Greeks had ad hoc formations to cooperate with the B.E.F. In the Aliakmon position there were 122 light anti-aircraft guns and almost no heavy ones. But the B.E.F. had its own difficulties. With some of its forces arriving only as the German invasion took place, trained for desert war and equipped with desert uniforms, and supplied with mechanised forces for fast and swift action in open country, it was impossible to operate well in mountains and ravines along narrow roads, under adverse weather conditions of sleet, snow, rain and wind. Some of its troops, especially the Australians, had never ever seen snow before.

The British tanks in Greece were in desperate need of immediate overhaul. Thought had been given to making repairs prior to their despatch, but in the end there was no time. Their engines were worn out, their tracks ready to break and repairs were very difficult, if not impossible, with few spare parts being available in Greece. By the end of the campaign, more British tanks had been taken out of action by
mechanical trouble than by enemy action. Since the tracks were already in bad shape, the British tanks could not move swiftly on the narrow, muddy or rocky mountain goat trails, and so the armoured capability of the B.E.F was lost, especially for the offensive. For fear of complete mechanical breakdown, therefore, the British tanks were committed to battle very reluctantly. Indeed, only locally and for a short time, did the British tanks ever show themselves in battle.

On the other hand, the Greek army was not a modern army by any standard. It moved on ox-wagon, or horse or mule-drawn transport on narrow unpaved roads at three miles an hour. Paul Freyberg claims that the Greek army moved slower than marching troops. The Commonwealth forces were also too dispersed over a wide area to be able to cover it adequately, even though better transported than the Greeks. The 2nd New Zealand Infantry Division was called to defend a front of over 16 miles when the Greek XIX Division was forced to move to the Axios plain in an anti-parachutist role.

Moreover, the New Zealanders arrived in Greece in the wrong order, with essential units such as their headquarters and signals support arriving last and the anti-tank regiment only at the beginning of the German attack. Neither Freyberg nor Blamey was asked by their superiors for an opinion on the operation in Greece; they were not even consulted. The degree of confusion was such, that the Northumberland Hussars were given wrong ammunition for their anti-tank guns, which were useless, for the start of the campaign.

In terms of movement to the front, the British forces could not have been transported easily either, even if they had arrived in time, simply because Greece, apart from having very few all weather roads, had only a single gauge railway line to the north, from Athens to Larissa, 190 miles in distance, which was already over-used by the Greeks themselves. The only large port, Piraeus, was also far away from the front. Volos harbour was closer to the front but
with less capacity for disembarkation. The railway line was vulnerable to bombing and sabotage and if this occurred, the British and the Greeks would have no railway line at all. (21) These are examples of the conditions under which the Allies started the Balkan campaign. Freyberg and Blamey had been uneasy about the prospect of success. On 10th March, Blamey had declared the "military operation extremely hazardous in view of the disparity between opposing forces in numbers and training." Freyberg had the same approach when he said on 4th April after the fruitless Yugoslav meeting in the Kenali that "the situation is a grave one; we shall be fighting against heavy odds in a plan that has been ill-conceived and one that violates every principle of military strategy." (22) Wilson, too, after the same meeting has said that it was the "most unusual and at the same time the most unsatisfactory conference I have ever attended." (23) The Greek General Staff had the following operational plan. In Western Thrace the Evros Brigade, was to defend the Bulgarian border, east of Lake Vistonida, and to attempt to secure the bridgehead of Pythio. If surrounded, it was to cross into Turkish territory, if there was no other escape. The task allotted to the Eastern Macedonia Army was to defend the area all along the Metaxas Line; or if strong enemy pressure made that stand impossible, to conduct a fighting withdrawal towards Salonika and west of the Axios, or towards Kavalla or Amphipolis, in an attempt to disengage itself and be evacuated to other parts of Greece. The Krusia Detachment was to fight where it stood and block the way to Salonika if the Metaxas Line was broken. Finally, Wilson's forces were to fight on the Aliakmon line and block the way to the west of their defence position. (24) The Central Macedonian Army was under the command of Wilson as well. Papagos was in overall charge but in case of disagreement with Wilson the latter could always refer to
Wavell. The British did not trust Greek fighting abilities. The Allied air force was composed of the R.A.F. aircraft mentioned in the previous chapter and the few serviceable planes of the Greeks. As will be seen later the weight of the enemy air force was such that it forced the Allied planes to concentrate on a few southern airfields and in the end these faced destruction on the ground. (25)

The morale of all the Greek troops was very high indeed, at least at the start of the campaign. The Greek army had humiliated a Great Power, Italy, all of whose quantitative might had proved unavailing in battle. Thus, until the Germans advanced deep into the south of Greece, morale was high. All the servicemen in the Greek army, navy and air force though facing assured defeat, knew that they would do their duty to the end. The British War Office and Wilson had a different opinion of Greek morale.

"While the Greeks were in no doubt whatever about their superiority over the Italians, their attitude towards the German menace was quite the reverse and gave the impression long before active operations commenced that if the German Army attacked GREECE it would be difficult, if not impossible, to compete. This attitude - which in some respect almost amounted to defeatism - was most noticeable amongst some senior commanders and needless to say did much to accentuate the difficulties in dealing with our Allies. The extent to which this feeling existed throughout the Greek Army was not brought to notice until German pressure began to exert itself, though there was in the country a British Military Mission. Furthermore Greeks do not appear to understand the techniques of modern war. Nor could any Greek soldiers ever be trusted to stand up to the intensive air action to which the whole force was subjected." (26)

Wilson criticizes Papagos severely for his decision not to withdraw any troops from Albania to strengthen the Bulgarian or the Aliakmon front. Wilson says that the Greek army was exhausted by all those months of fighting in Albania, its physical endurance and morale had fallen
sharply. According to Wilson, there was a "fetihistic doctrine" that the Greeks were always stationed in the front, without yielding a yard of ground to the enemy, and it resulted in continuous fatigue and losses of troops, who did not have a respite for regrouping, replenishing and above all, rest. (27)

Wilson goes on to say that, when the withdrawal of the Greek army in Albania became imperative, the Greek resistance's "bottom fell out of it". (28)

It seems, however, that the British War Office files tend to agree more with Papagos - and to a large extent justify his inability to withdraw prematurely his forces from Albania - and less with Wilson's comment on the Greek strategy and subsequent withdrawal:

"The vast possibilities offered by success in ALBANIA should explain the reluctance of General PAPAGOS prematurely to withdraw. Apart from the strain on the morale of the Army and the Country, which such a withdrawal would have occasioned, it would have given new heart to the ITALIANS and freed them of anxiety as regards DURAZZO and VALONA.

Few Commanders can have been faced with a greater dilemma than was General PAPAGOS. His continued reluctance even at the end to withdraw was due to hope that the YUGOSLAV offensive into ALBANIA might yet succeed.

The elimination of thirty ITALIAN divisions in ALBANIA offered the only prospect of the campaign being fought between armies of equal strength. So long as the faintest hope of achieving this remained, either by his own effort or with the help of the YUGOSLAV Army, it is considered that General PAPAGOS was justified in his great but unhappy gamble. [author's emphasis] (29)

It should be noted that the above quotation derives from the Report by the Inter-Services Committee ordered to examine the report of Wilson's Force (July 1941). I would like to point out, that though the War Office justifies Papagos reluctance to withdraw in time his forces from Albania, it
does stress the fact, that Papagos', inability to do so, was based mainly on the faintest hope that he might be able to eliminate the Italians in Albania possibly with the help of the Yugoslav army. I believe that Papagos should not have attached such importance to the Yugoslav army, and from the moment he saw the inability or unwillingness of the Yugoslavs to assist him, he should have ordered the immediate withdrawal of the Greek forces in Albania. However, Papagos attached great importance to the Yugoslav army probably because he knew that he could not eliminate the Italians in Albania with his own forces only, and that forced him (in that faintest hope) to keep his army in Albania. By the time he understood the inability of the Yugoslavs to assist him, it was already too late, and when he ordered the retreat of his army from Albania, this took place with grave results for the Greeks.

6e) The German Juggernaut

The Germans had concentrated in Bulgaria the 12th Army led by Field Marshal Wilhelm List. It included the XXX Army Corps led by Lieutenant-General Hartmann with the 50th and 164th Infantry Divisions, the XL Armoured Corps led by Lieutenant-General Stumme with the SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler Reinforced Motorized Infantry Regiment, the 9th Armoured Division and the 73rd Infantry Division. The 12th Army also had the First Armoured Group (1st Panzergruppe) led by General von Kleist with the XI Army Corps and XIV Armoured Corps including the 5th, and 11th Armoured Divisions, the 60th Motorized Infantry Division, the 4th Mountain Division, the 294th Infantry Division and the 198th Infantry Division.

Additionally the 12th Army included, the XLI Armoured Corps led by Lieutenant-General Reinhardt with the 1st SS Das Reich Motorized Infantry Division, the General Hermann Goering Luftwaffe Regiment and the Grossdeutschland
Independent Motorized Infantry Regiment. Finally the 12th Army included the elite XVIII Mountain Army Corps led by Lieutenant-General Boehme with the 5th and 6th Mountain Divisions, the 2nd Armoured Division, the 72nd Infantry Division and the 125th Independent Reinforced Infantry Regiment. In reserve the 12th Army had the 46th and 76th Infantry Divisions and the 16th Armoured Division. All the reserve formations were allotted to the L Corps stationed in the area of Filipoupolis.

Altogether the 12th Army had 10 infantry divisions, of which two were mechanised, 5 armoured divisions, 3 mountain divisions, and 3 independent reinforced regiments, in 6 army corps. It should be noted however, that due to the sudden political change in Yugoslavia, some of the forces of 12th Army were allotted to the 2nd Army for its attack on her. Thus at the eve of the battle, 12th Army possessed the XL Armoured Corps, the XVIII Mountain Corps and the XXX Corps. The XLI Armoured Corps and the First Armoured Group were transferred to the 2nd Army. The 16th Armoured Division, which was in reserve, was stationed on the Turkish border. Hence, the reserve divisions of the 12th Army were reduced to two, the 46th and 76th Infantry Divisions.

The German Commander-in-Chief of the Army Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch was stationed in Vienna to direct the Balkan attack on Greece, while Hitler and Goering set up headquarters on the Semmering Pass to the south-west of Vienna. The 12th Army and the 2nd Army deployed for the campaign in Yugoslavia and Greece were covered by the entire 4th Air Fleet commanded by General Alexander Lohr. The 4th Air Fleet consisted of two Air Corps, the VIII Fliegerkorps under General Wolfram Richthofen and the XI under General Kurt Student.

At the beginning of the operations, only the VIII Air Corps was allotted to the operations in Greece with 650 first line planes (280 bombers, 150 Stuka dive-bombers, 90 single-engined fighters, 90 twin-engined fighter-bombers and 40
reconnaissance planes). On the eve of the campaign against Yugoslavia and Greece, the 4th Air Fleet was reinforced with 576 additional planes from Germany and France and with 168 from the X Fliegerkorps stationed in Sicily. The number of German planes amounted around to 1000, and there were about 230 Italian aircraft in Albania, the 246 or so operating from advanced bases in Italy, and those in the Dodecanese. (31)

The safeguarding of the Greco-Bulgarian border was left to the Bulgarian army, also mobilised, with its I, VII and X Infantry Divisions. The Italian army in Albania was to take no part in the offensive. It was ordered to defend its positions and not to allow the Greeks to link up with the Yugoslavs. The Italian army had in Albania 21 first line divisions in two armies, the 9th and the 11th.

The 9th Army had the Taro, Forli, and Venezia Divisions in the III Army Corps and the Tridentina, Piemonte and Parma Divisions in the XXVI Army Corps. The 11th Army had the Pusteria and Cacciatori delle Alpi Divisions in the IV Army Corps, the Pinerolo, Cagliari and Siena Divisions in the VIII Army Corps, the Brennero, Legnano, Sforzesca, Julia, Lupi di Toscana and Ferrara Divisions in the XXV Army Corps and the Acqui and Cuneo Divisions in the Special Army Corps. Two additional divisions, the Bari and the Casale, formed the reserves. Hitler did not trust the Italian forces. In a letter to the Duce, he wrote that the German army would finish off the Allies and the Italian assistance was no longer wanted or needed. (32)

The German operational plan was that the XXX Army Corps should attack the areas of Pasmakli and Kyrtzali. The XVIII Mountain Army Corps was to attack from Petritsi to Nevrokopi. The XL Armoured Corps was placed opposite the Stromnitsa area initially. After the Yugoslav coup, it was redirected to the west against Skopje and ordered, as soon as that city was taken, to turn south through Monastir and
Florina, to attack the Anglo-Greek contingent on the Aliakmon. See Maps 10,11,13,14,17,18,19

The 5th Armoured Division in Kleist’s Panzergruppe was to operate in Greece after the end of the Yugoslav campaign. The aim of the XVIII Mountain Army Corps was to attack first the Metaxas Line, to march through the valley of the River Axios to Salonika and divide Eastern Macedonia from the rest of the Allied forces, while preparing bridgeheads for the advance to the west.(33)

After the Yugoslav uprising, the German strategy changed to include a simultaneous attack on both countries. The attack was to start on 6th April with the initial objective that forces operating from Bulgaria occupy Eastern Macedonia and Western Thrace including the Edessa plateau and Salonika. Until the Yugoslav uprising the German forces could not expect to use Yugoslav territory for the attack on Greece. After the Belgrade coup and since Yugoslavia was then to be invaded as well, the Germans could switch their main effort to the west of the Metaxas Line and avoid a costly and time-consuming frontal attack on it, which however, materialised.

The objective of the 12th Army would therefore be to move to the south-eastern borders of Yugoslavia and advance through Yugoslav territory to attack the Allied forces. In that way, the Metaxas Line would be outflanked on the west and south and the 12th Army could hope to interpose itself between the Allied forces on the Aliakmon and the rear of the Greek army in Albania, bringing disaster to both. Also such an action would exclude the possibility of a coherent and uninterrupted Yugoslav and Greek front against the Germans in Central Yugoslavia and the Italians in Albania.

The new operational plan of the 12th Army was the following: the XXX Army Corps would drive down to the Aegean coast of Eastern Macedonia and capture the offshore islands of Northern Greece. It would then turn west crossing the River Nestos and attack Salonika. In that way the XVIII Mountain Army Corps would be assisted in its dangerous
semi-frontal attack on the Metaxas Line. The XVIII Mountain
Army Corps would also perform an outflanking movement of
the fortified line at its Achilles heel, the western part. The
2nd Armoured Division was to perform the main task of the
outflanking. The coordinated action of the XVIII Mountain
Army Corps from the west and of the XXX Army from the
east would envelop Salonika and the Greek army in the
region. See Maps 10,11,13,14,17,18,19

Meanwhile the XL Armoured Corps would invade Southern
Yugoslavia too and, after linking with the Italians in Albania
would turn to the south in the direction of Monastir-Florina-
Kirli-Derveni-Grevena in order to threaten the rear of the
right flank of the Greek army in Albania and the left of the
Anglo-Greek contingent on the Aliakmon line.(34) Thus the
development of the operations in Greece would be
undertaken by three Corps, the XL, XVIII and XXX.

The XL Armoured Corps would make a wide and deep
flanking movement around both the Greeks in Albania and
the Allies on the Aliakmon and drive towards Athens. The
whole German operational plan was based on swift
mechanised and armoured action, even on unsuitable terrain,
and on the continuous tactical support of the Luftwaffe. The
ground forces would meet less resistance, and proceed
smoother and faster, if the German air force had bombed and
strafed the enemy prior to their advance. In other words, the
paradigm of the modern Air-Land Doctrine.

At the same time, in order to decisively crush the Yugoslav
uprising and resistance, the German forces would be
unleashed simultaneously from Bulgaria, through Nis to
Belgrade and from Graz and Klagenfurt in Austria to the
south-east. The Luftwaffe would wipe out the enemy air
force and hamper the movement of the ground forces. In the
case of Yugoslavia there would be no ultimatum given and no
breaking of diplomatic relations. The attack code-named
Retribution would be ceaseless. However Athens was declared
an open city and was to be spared devastation. This did not apply to its port, Piraeus.(35)

A comparison of the opposing forces shows a depressing contrast for the Allies between the overwhelming German juggernaut and their own denuded state. Around 1000 German planes against 80 British and the handful of the Greek air force. 1080 mortars against 445, 1549 anti-tank guns against 228, 1086 field and mountain guns against 427, 1097 tanks (in 18 tank battalions) against 176 Allied (in 7 battalions), 72 infantry battalions (9 of them motorized) against 70 Anglo-Greek.(36)

Moreover with the exception of the B.E.F, the units of E.M.A. and C.M.A. were hastily made up, lacking cohesion and training and were not battle-worthy. The German units included not just battle hardened formations but in certain cases elite units such as the SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler Motorized Reinforced Infantry Regiment, the General Hermann Goering Luftwaffe Regiment, the 1st SS Das Reich Motorized Infantry Division, the Grossdeutschland Independent Motorized Infantry Regiment, the 125th Independent Reinforced Infantry Regiment and the three Gebirgsjaeger (mountain) divisions, the 4th, 5th and 6th.

Apart from the undoubtedly numerical German superiority in the air and on the ground, qualitative superiority existed in the equipment as well. For the Mark I, II and III German Panzers, only the British Cruisers were any match: the few captured Italian tanks and the fewer Dutch ones in the Greek XIX "motorized" division and the other British infantry tanks and Bren carriers were not in the same class; though the few Italian tanks were not inferior to Mark I and II but only to Mark III. In terms of air power, the Hurricanes gave the Allies their only advantage, but there were very few, while the rest of the Allied air force (with Greek P.Z.L., Bloch, Potez, Gladiator, etc.) could not compete under any terms with the German Messerschmitt Bf109s and 110s, Junkers 87s and 88s, Dornier 17s, Heinkel IIIIs etc.
Additionally as the British War Office records show, the liaison between the Allied armies and the Yugoslav, on which Papagos and the British partially depended for the protection of the western part of Metaxas Line and the Monastir gap (between Greek and Yugoslav armies) did not exist. Similarly there was little cooperation between the Greeks and the British themselves.

"It is regrettable to record that upon their arrival in ATHENS, the most senior officers on "W" Force Headquarters, appear to have allowed their judgement and reason to be so warped by a clash of personalities that the existing machinery for liaison was deliberately and wantonly sabotaged." (37)

Additionally, the British did not possess any correct maps of Greece. Though it was evident from the start that for a military campaign in Greece and in the Balkans generally, the use of accurate road and topographic information was imperative, there was no attempt to produce up-to-date maps. Thus, the British units were either using incorrect maps, or in some cases none at all. In terms of intelligence the British seemed to be perfectly informed about the German forces and intentions. As Woodhouse, member of the British mission in Greece, has said, the British had the German battle order every evening and the precision on German information was very accurate, however it was of very little value when it came to battle since the British had nothing to fight with. (38)

Also the German camp could bring up, if in need, more forces from Europe, although it proved to be unnecessary. The British could send nothing more, since Rommel was very active in North Africa and the Greeks had nothing more. The German side could reinforce, withdraw, regroup, replace or replenish depleted or destroyed formations, the Allies had to go on with whatever they had in the field. Moreover, the Allies were divided into two separate fronts, which enabled
the Germans to engage each individually with their maximum power, without the Allies having the ability to shift forces from the other front to reinforce it. That proves beyond anything else the scarcity of the Allied forces.

In addition to all the above disadvantages, the Allies had to fight the Italians as well, even though this enemy was less powerful than the German one. The British in Greece were equipped with field guns, field dressing stations, field trucks and tanks (albeit with bad tracks) in order to fight on mountainous roads, mountainous battlefields, mountain-trained opponent or even mountain weather.

The Greek side was more adapted to mountainous warfare, but had very little to fight with. The Greek transport system was already inadequate and ready to break down, while the Germans could use the road, rail, river and sea communications of Austria, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, and later on of Yugoslavia, to maintain their logistic support until they arrived in Greece. Finally the German forces attacking the Metaxas Line were not just well-trained generally, but knew how to attack and possibly breach such a line.

The only things that the Allies had were morale, which would soon start to fall sharply, and the justice of their cause, which does not actually help when the adversary has sheer numerical and qualitative superiority. Sad as it may be, the Allies had lost the battle before it had ever begun.

6th April

On 6th April 1941, at 0530 the German Minister visited Koryzis and handed him a declaration (not even the usual ultimatum) that the German troops would soon cross the Greek borders. Perhaps the Germans wanted to avoid the humiliation of accepting a flat Greek 'No' as in Italy's case.
Actually the invasion had started around 15 minutes earlier. Like their ally, Italy, the Germans did not choose to observe diplomatic protocol or to give the Greeks any opportunity to respond. Unfounded and irrational accusations and allegations against Greece’s conduct as a neutral were the order of that infamous day. Information reaching the Greek High Command from British Intelligence (Enigma decrypts) and from the border sectors had indicated the day and hour of the attack, and the Greek General Staff (G.H.Q.) had ordered the detonation of the demolition charges set in roads, bridges, tunnels, etc, so as to delay the German advance. The first Germans were not able therefore to exploit their early attack. See Map 10,11,14,18,19

The Yugoslav campaign will be referred to only in so far as it is directly related to the Greek one. The German attack on Greece was directed mainly at the fortified Metaxas Line, with intense air bombardment of the front line troops and of communications in the interior of Eastern Macedonia. The main effort of the enemy was directed at Mount Beles and the Struma valley forts along the line to Kato Nevrokopi and Komotini. The Greek border troops, as ordered, delayed the enemy as much as they could and then withdrew.

Fort Lisse was unsuccessfully attacked by 3 infantry battalions and strong artillery fire. After the Germans had been reinforced with new battalions, they attacked again with the tanks. They were repulsed and two German tanks destroyed. Having failed to take Lisse, they moved their attack to Perithori in the corridor between Forts Lisse and Ousoyia. Their morning efforts failed to produce any result and they tried during the night under the cover of fog and rain. Their night attacks failed as well, with many losses from the Greek field artillery and the guns of Forts Ousoyia and Dasavli, their only prize being the village of Lisse.(39)

In the sector of the XIV Greek Infantry Division the Germans attacked in the Rupel-Usita-Paliouriones area with heavy artillery (82 batteries), intense air bombing by 120-
125 dive-bombers, motorized forces and tanks; their attempts were all fruitless. At the same time, German engineers crossed the River Struma with rubber dinghies and moved to the south. Meanwhile, three German planes were brought down by the Greek anti-aircraft fire and some prisoners were taken. The Germans were altogether unable to pierce the Greek line. Fort Karatas was also subjected to intense fire by artillery and air force, but was not destroyed. Around noon German tanks appeared and tried to break through the corridor between the Rupel and Karatas forts, but were repulsed. Fort Babazora was also attacked by artillery and air force. Around 200 German paratroopers landed in the area of Rupel but were wiped out, except for a few survivors who were caught.

Fort Maliaga was first attacked at 0700 by artillery. At 1100 an infantry battalion launched its attack on it and approached Mount Stragatsi but all the German forces were stopped. During the night, the enemy moved closer to the fort. Forts Perithori and Partalouska were attacked also. The former was attacked by a number of motor-cycle troops and artillery. The two forts returned combined fire. About noon, flat-trajectory guns opened fire on Fort Perithori's embrasures. Greek artillery returned fire and silenced the German flat-trajectory guns. But that night, German units managed to break through Greek lines and reach the village of Perithori. (40)

In the sector of the XVIII Greek Infantry Division enemy artillery and dive bombers attacked Fort Paliouriones intensively. Later on enemy infantry attempted to capture it but failed to do so. Some enemy tanks were destroyed. At 0500 German artillery and dive-bombers opened fire on Fort Arpalouki with flat-trajectory guns using high explosive shells and smoke canisters. The fort caught fire and was enveloped in smoke but continued to fight back. Fort Kelkaya was attacked that morning too with the usual bombardment, by artillery and heavy anti-tank guns. No success was
achieved and the attackers lost many men. In the afternoon an enemy detachment managed temporarily to place itself on the top of Kelkaya but the majority of the Germans were rapidly thrown off by Greek artillery fire and two counter-attacks by the fort's garrison.

The enemy persisted with a second charge, which was more successful, managing to reach the fort, blow up two of its auxiliary exits and enter. A cruel battle took place inside the fort's dark corridors and the Greeks pushed back the Germans.(41) During the night, the remaining Germans who had managed to stay onto the roof of Fort Kelkaya attempted to block the machine-gun posts and to blow up parts of the fort so as to eliminate its defence, but failed to do so. Fort Istibey was attacked early the morning of 6th April by flat-trajectory guns and dive bombers. Later on a German infantry formation attacked it. At 0730 the Germans, after destroying some defence works on it, managed to get onto the roof. A Greek battalion counter-attacked but failed to push the Germans back.

The commander of the fort, seeing that the enemy was preparing to break in by systematically destroying its machine-gun emplacements, ordered a second counter-attack by its garrison. This time also, the enemy met the Greek attack with rapid automatic fire and the Greeks were halted. After dark the Germans attempted a night attack but had to withdraw with heavy losses. Fort Popotlivitsa was charged by infantry supported by planes and artillery, but the attack failed. During the night the enemy secured a small bridgehead near the fort.(42)

At the extreme east end of the fortified position, the Evros Brigade fought a successful delaying action and withdrew to Komotini. The enemy attacked Fort Nymphae with heavy artillery and motorized formations, but failed with many losses. The fort was bombed and attacked throughout the day but with the exception of some minor damage, it remained unbreached. The Nestos Brigade also withdrew successfully.
Meanwhile the enemy supported by 170 motor-cyclists appeared to have taken Fort Echinos but though at 1330 German infantry of two companies attacked it frontally they failed to advance. During the night the enemy shelled the fort with automatic fire and artillery, but still unsuccessfuffly.

The Metaxas Line was held intact on 6th April. However, the penetration of small German forces through Yugoslavia to the west of the line at Rodopolis, caused a dangerous situation for the Metaxas Line. In order to stop any further breach of the western side of Metaxas Line, the E.M.A ordered the XIX Motorized Division and the Krusia Detachment to occupy the area between Lake Doiran and Lake Kerkini. These Greek forces clashed with the Germans in Rodopolis. When unable to stop the Germans they withdrew to the area of Struma-Lake Kerkini. (43)

7th April

In the Krusia area some weak German forces attempted a breakthrough but were repulsed. In the Beles area, the forward Fort Popotliwitsa, after being attacked throughout the day, succumbed to the Germans in the afternoon. The XIX Motorized Division was attacked numerous times, sustaining great losses. It seemed briefly that the enemy would gain a foothold in the east. Strong enemy air activity caused considerable damage to the centre of the XIX Division and the Krusia Detachment. See Maps 10,11,14,18,19

Fort Nymphaea had been repeatedly attacked with artillery, infantry, tanks, and planes. It sustained heavy damage but remained operational. A spirited German attack, using flamethrowers and grenades inside the fort, forced its commander to surrender at 1130 to save his men from suffocation. (44) The rest of the Evros Brigade escaped into Turkish territory and was disarmed. Only a small fraction of it managed to escape by ship to the south. Fort Echinos was heavily
attacked by German sappers equipped with dynamite, by infantry, and by cavalry and was shelled by 12 artillery batteries. All German attempts failed sustaining 200 dead.

Fort Lisse was shelled by German batteries and attacked by an infantry battalion but Greek artillery and mortars cut it short. Four German batteries were destroyed by one Greek. Fort Dasavli was attacked by tanks and infantry, and a small German group managed to occupy a position on top of it. A successful counter-attack of its garrison with mortars forced the enemy to retire. Fort Perithori, though temporarily captured by enemy troops who had managed to enter it, was re-captured by the Greeks. Forts Maliaga, Karatas, Paliouriones, Rupel and Ousoya resisted all German attacks by infantry, tanks, artillery and planes. Unfortunately Forts Popotlivitsa and Istibey were forced to capitulate when German soldiers closed down their ventilation systems after throwing in grenades, petrol, and dynamite, which started to suffocate the Greeks. The latter, having no way to escape, decided to capitulate. (45)

Though some of the Greek forts had been captured, the Metaxas Line still held. The crisis, however, was developing to the west of the line. The XIX Greek Division reported that the 2nd German Armoured Division had taken Strumitza and was advancing to Valandovo. Elements of the XIX Motorized Division encountered Yugoslav border troops who requested immediate supplies of British and Greek anti-tank guns, tanks, vehicles and air cover. That was out of the question since the E.M.A had no reserves. The XIX Division, in order to protect the western flank of the fortified position, despatched some of its forces to the River Axios and reinforced them with the only battalion that was earmarked to protect Salonika. Thus that city remained defenceless. Additional Greek units were on their way to Eastern Macedonia but by the time they were sent the crisis was out of control. (46)
The Greek General Staff was deeply concerned by the Yugoslav situation which was decisively affecting the Metaxas Line. A Greek officer, Colonel Thomas Pentzopoulos, was despatched to Velessa to report on the situation from there. He found the Yugoslav commander of the Bregnalitsa Division which had been overrun. Its commander told him that chaos and disorder were great in the south, and later on that Skopje had fallen. Pentzopoulos in turn informed Athens that the situation in Southern Yugoslavia was out of hand and that the Velessa-Perlepes-Monastir-Florina road was wide open and unprotected by Allied troops. At the same time, three Yugoslav divisions were reported as having surrendered and Monastir would probably fall on the 8th. (47)

On the evening of 7th April Greek forces reported that strong German motorized columns were approaching Valandovo and Doiran. At 2100 the XIX Division reported that Valandovo and Fourkas had been lost to the enemy and that the Germans were seen taking the Doiran plateau, the area around the lake, and Gevgeli. In order to rectify the situation, the XIX Division ordered one of its regiments and the border troops of Sector IX, whose anti-tank guns had run out of ammunition altogether, to stop the German advance by closing the gap between Doiran and Cherson. That was an impossible task, since the XIX Division had been covering a front of 60 km. The division had no telephone contact with E.M.A. and it could not use wireless due to the presence of high mountains. (48)

E.M.A. requested the use of the 1st British Armoured Brigade west of the Axios to halt the German advance. However Athens Headquarters did not approve that. It is not known why the Greek General Staff rejected that appeal by E.M.A. Possibly because it did not want to commit this British unit into action so soon, and preferred to use it in the Aliakmon front only; or because the battle in Eastern Macedonia was lost already, and Athens Headquarters did not
want to sacrifice any more able units - and especially the only armoured formation in Greece - to a lost battle. A small contingent of the R.A.F. bombed the Strumitza valley full of German motorized columns and the enemy was delayed. (49) Yet the situation was basically unchanged. Papagos must have foreseen the end of E.M.A.’s forces. He was reluctant to withdraw any troops from there since they were already in close contact with the enemy and he was against the despatch of new forces that would also be trapped. He did not wish any forces to retire from Albania either to assist the E.M.A.

He was depressed because the Yugoslavs had not launched any attack in Albania against the Italians and the Germans to the east of the Beles position. Information from Yugoslavia seemed to be ambivalent. The British Intelligence Service and the Yugoslav Military Attaché received reports that the Yugoslav army had been attacking the Germans inside Bulgaria and at Skopje. On the other hand, Greek Intelligence, which proved to be more accurate, pointed to the direct opposite of the other two Allies’ intelligence, that the Germans were advancing deep inside Yugoslav territory. (50)

8th April

In the sector of the Nestos Brigade, the Germans attacked and surrounded Fort Echinos but the fort sustained all the attacks, inflicting heavy losses. Two German infantry companies attacked it, and managed to throw smoke and asphyxiating gases inside while the Germans aimed to destroy the fort’s embrasures with flat-trajectory guns. The garrison made a counter-attack, breaking out to cut through the German lines. Initially, that was successful, but when the Greeks discovered that the whole area around them was in German hands, they surrendered. In the sector of the VII Infantry Division, the Germans attacked the Forts Dasavli, Lisse and Pyramidoides without success. To the west of the
VII Division, the Germans occupied the Kresti heights though that division attempted to re-capture them.

Finally a combined attack of the Greek VII and XIV Infantry Divisions brought the north-western parts of the Kresti heights back into Greek hands. In the area of the XIV Division the Germans attacked Fort Perithori numerous times. They used tanks, infantry and artillery, firing on a flat trajectory to attack it. Some German detachments were able to occupy the top of it, but Greek soldiers pushed them back. At 1245 that fort and the one next to it, Skylla, were attacked by two enemy infantry regiments. After three hours of combat, the enemy was repulsed. Greek artillery outside the forts destroyed enemy siege equipment. Fort Maliaga was also attacked throughout the previous night and in between fog and haze. Greek machine-gun fire kept the enemy in a safe distance. See Maps 10, 11, 14, 18, 19

Forts Rupel and Karatas were unscathed and inflicted serious losses on the attacking German infantry. Three German aircraft were also shot down. The elite German 125th Independent Reinforced Infantry Regiment managed to climb down the slopes of Mount Beles and with the 5th Mountain Division attempted to encircle the left of the XIV Greek Division, which was urgently reinforced with a company of light tanks, two infantry battalions and guns. To the west of Metaxas Line, German motorized battalions encountered units of the Greek XVIII Division in Sidirokastron and at the Megalochorion bridges. Fort Paliouriones was shelled by artillery all day, but when the German infantry dashed at it, they were cut to pieces. Even when the Germans managed to surround it, Paliouriones fired back and stopped all German attempts.

The whole situation in Eastern Macedonia was going to be decided by what was going on in the western part of it. The Greek troops deployed to the Axios valley, did not all arrive in time to fight the enemy, and the units which did were destroyed. Powerful units of the German 2nd Armoured
Division came down in three columns from Doiran. After defeating the Greek units in Akritas village, the Germans moved towards Cherson and Kilkis, Megali Sterna and Polykastro, eliminating all Greek resistance encountered. At the same time, 5 battalions of the German 6th Mountain Division attacked the centre and west of the Krusia position.

The 2nd Regiment of the XIX Motorized Division defended stubbornly but in the end had to give way. Soon the Germans broke through and moved to the village of Metallikon and on to Kilkis, which fell during the night. Along their way, the Germans dissolved the Greek XIX Division whose remnants, unable to cope with their powerful adversaries, withdrew to Hellinikon.(53)

Seeing the irretrievable situation, the commander of the E.M.A ordered its forces, apart from the Metaxas Line garrison, to retreat to the south, so as to be embarked on ships and escape captivity. Any retreat to the south of Axios was impossible, since the Germans were there. The Greek navy had, under Plan "Θ (Theta)" gathered 12 ships which could evacuate up to 20,000 men from Alexandroupolis, Amphipolis and Salonika harbours, as well as 87 small petrol-engined boats and caiques that could carry around 6,000 men.(54)

However, Bakopoulos, the E.M.A. commander knew that, even if 26,000 men escaped, the majority would be trapped. Unable to prolong the resistance, due to the outflanking of the Metaxas Line to the west, the absence of friendly airpower to cover the evacuation and the deep penetration of the Germans in the Axios valley from where they could easily attack the evacuating forces as they retreated, he telephoned Papagos. Papagos, after weighing up the situation, authorized him to capitulate when the E.M.A was no longer able to fight to protect Salonika. The mission of the E.M.A. had been accomplished. It had delayed the enemy as long as it could, from reaching the Aliakmon position. However, the enemy had broken through from Yugoslavia, rendering any
further resistance of the Metaxas Line garrison useless, and
the Germans would soon take Salonika and attack the
Aliakmon position. Hence, there was no reason to continue a
senseless fight, which would only kill more of E.M.A.'s
troops. (55)

9th April

While Bakopoulos was surrendering to the vanguard of the
German 2nd Armoured Division, some of the forts were still
fighting. In the sector of the Nestos Infantry Brigade, the
Germans attempted to cross the River Nestos but were
repulsed. The brigade commander, unable to contact his
superiors owing to damaged telephone lines, decided to
withdraw during the night to Chrysoupolis hoping to transfer
his forces to the island of Thasos. In the sector of the VII
Infantry Division, Greek forces made a local counter-attack
and occupied the Kresti heights. However, Forts Pyramoides,
Lisse and Dasavli, after being informed of the surrender,
capitulated. The XIV Infantry Division continued its struggle,
without being broken by the enemy. Forts Maliaga and
Perithori fired at any enemy unit which tried to infiltrate
between them. During the night of 8th/9th April an enemy
battalion moved to the rear, of Forts Partalouska and
Perithori, but was eliminated by reserve Greek platoons from
the garrisons of the forts supported by the flanking fire of
Fort Maliaga. See Maps 10, 11, 14, 18, 19

The Germans made a third attempt. After re-taking the
Kresti heights, a German platoon moved on the Aghios
Konstantinos plateau to the rear of the forts. A Greek small
unit moved under artillery cover to destroy the enemy
platoon and captured 250 prisoners. Forts Rupel and Usita
did not capitulate, though called upon to do so, and
continued to resist all enemy attacks. Three German planes
were brought down. The Goliana heights were captured by a
German formation, despite the stubborn resistance of the XIV Division. (56)

In the sector of the XVIII Infantry Division, the enemy dive-bombed and shelled Fort Paliouriones. All the infantry attacks were brought to a standstill with heavy losses but once the fort was informed of the capitulation of the E.M.A., it too surrendered. The garrison of the Rupesko position managed to escape capture and resisted the Germans. In the sector of the XIX Motorized Division, the 193rd Regiment was attacked by the Germans from the rear and was captured. It had remained unsupported as the neighbouring 192nd abandoned its position without orders and fled to Kilkis. (57)

On 10th April, the majority of the E.M.A. had capitulated with the exception of small Greek forces that had either escaped or were not informed of the surrender. The formal capitulation took place to Major-General Veil, leading the 2nd Armoured. The 12th Army had attacked Greece with four infantry, two armoured and two mountain divisions, two independent reinforced regiments, (one infantry, the 125th, and one motorized, the SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler) and two reserve divisions, grouped into three Army Corps. The Eastern Macedonian Army had fought against all these forces. (58) The E.M.A. had no air support except that occasionally provided by the R.A.F. Although it is difficult to estimate the total losses of the E.M.A., the casualties in dead and wounded probably did not exceed 1000 men. However a Greek army of around 63,000 men had been captured.

The German losses of the XVIII Mountain Army Corps that led the attack on the Metaxas Line, were around 555 dead, 2,134 injured and 170 missing in action, not counting officers. If it had not been for the outflanking of the Metaxas Line from Yugoslav territory, the line would have held longer. It is impossible to predict how long the Metaxas Line would have resisted the Germans if not outflanked, but a collapse would have taken place some time. Finally on 21st April the Bulgarian army entered Eastern Macedonia,
according to the Bulgaro-German agreement, though Bakopoulos had requested that Bulgarian troops should not enter Greece and that Greek soldiers should not be interned in Bulgarian prison camps. (59)

Lieutenant-General Geramanis argues that the E.M.A. should not have been authorized to capitulate so soon. He believes that Athens Headquarters should have ordered the E.M.A. to withdraw in order to save the majority of its troops. However, by the time Papagos approved this, the German penetration was so deep and fast that it imperiled any evacuation. The Greek Staff had acted too late to save E.M.A. and in consequence the only thing it could order was its surrender. According to Geramanis, if the E.M.A had retired south to Mount Pageon and Khalkidhiki, it might have continued to fight since it could have been supplied by sea. (60)

However, I believe that with the overwhelming German air superiority, it would have proven very difficult to maintain such a large army, only supplied by sea. The losses of ships as a result of air attacks would have been so great that the supply of that army would have proven unattainable. The only solution for the E.M.A. would have been to withdraw well before the deep German advance into Eastern Macedonia. From the moment such a possibility was not considered by the Greek General Staff, as early as it should have been, the fate of the E.M.A. was sealed.

Air Activity 4th-9th April

During this period the German air force developed an intense activity against front line targets and in the interior of the country. On 6th April 12 Hurricanes met 20 Me Bf 109s and shot down five without loss to themselves. 2 Greek P.Z.L.s and 1 Bloch attacked a German reconnaissance plane over the Strymonas front and shot it down. Later on, 3 Greek planes destroyed a German plane over Kilkis. The same night
6 British Wellingtons and some Blenheims attacked the railway station at Sofia and various other installations in Gorna Djumaya and Petrich. Two Wellingtons were brought down and one damaged by flak.(61)

The next evening 9 Blenheims attacked ground targets in the Strumitza valley. The escorting Hurricanes attacked a lone Dornier 17 and brought it down. On 8th April, 8 Blenheims of the No.11 Squadron with an escort of Hurricanes attacked the airfield in Petrich in Bulgaria and strafed the German machines on the ground. Two German planes were reported destroyed. The weather was still bad, but 6 Hurricanes of No. 80 Squadron attempted a patrol. They were temporarily lost in cloud and had to return. One more German Dornier was shot down by two Hurricanes. The Greek air force had undertaken to protect Salonika. However, with the exception of the first day, the Greek planes were unsuccessful in discovering the enemy. Prior to the invasion, on 4th April, the Greek torpedo-boat Prousa was dive-bombed and sunk by six Stukas.(62)

However, the German air force had achieved complete supremacy in the Balkan campaign. A number of Junkers 88s took off from Sicily to bomb Piraeus. 11 Heinkels 111s were to follow the attack and mine the harbour. At 0225 the attack started on the harbour, which was filled with ships in the process of being unloaded. Among the first ships to be hit was the Clan Fraser of 7529 tons, loaded with TNT. Another ship, the City of Roubaix of 7100 tons, also loaded with ammunition, caught fire. The cargo of the Clan Fraser had started being unloaded onto a train of 12 wagon which were half-loaded. At around 0315 Clan Fraser blew up, and the City of Roubaix and the Goalpatra followed.

The harbour was shocked by the worst explosion in its history. Buildings, boats, caiques, installations, quays, berths, tugs, docks, cranes, even the train nearby were instantly engulfed in a terrific explosion, which was heard 150 miles away, while all the windows in a radius of seven miles
broke. The destruction could not have been worse. All the ships close to the three blown up were either destroyed or sunk. Another 11 freighters of around 41,789 tons in aggregate were sunk or burnt out. In addition, two tugs, 60 lighters, 25 caiques and many more smaller vessels disappeared, not to mention damage to other ships and shore installations. (63) See Maps 10, 12

Most of the quays and berths were utterly destroyed. All the ammunition arriving for the Greek and to a lesser extent the British army was lost. The Allies faced further shortage of ammunition, the harbour was rendered almost unserviceable until the end of the campaign and was for the next ten days closed to all ships. Huge problems were created. No incoming ships could unload their cargo and had to be diverted to other ports with significantly less unloading capacity and much closer to the front, adding to their risk of being bombed by the Luftwaffe. Most of all, Greek morale, fragile after the fall of Salonika, was further shaken.

As usual, the Allies blamed each other. The British accused the Greeks of being too slow in unloading the ship and unable to exclude German diplomatic personnel who spied at Piraeus (Chapter 5). The Greeks said that they knew nothing about the cargo of Clan Fraser and that only after the ship was hit, did the British inform the Greek authorities that it was carrying 400 tons of TNT. There appears to be some truth in each argument. If the British knew that the Germans monitored all activities in Greece, they might have decided to keep secret the real cargo in order to prevent the information from passing to the enemy through the ineffective Greek security system. Unfortunately by sheer luck (?) the Luftwaffe found the cargo.

Information from the Greek Directorate of Naval History tends to support the Greek case. It appears that once the British started to arrive in Greece, they had their own embarkation and disembarkation zones, workers, personnel,
security, etc. British ships were unloaded mostly in the British zones and under British surveillance. The Greeks had numerous times requested that the British informed them of any cargo containing explosives or ammunition which needed special care and unloading facilities. However, the Greek authorities were not informed of the detailed cargo of each British ship, but only in a very general form i.e. military stores. The Greeks were therefore unaware in detail of the cargo of the British ships until their unloading and only then did their authorities see each separate cargo. Accordingly, the Clan Fraser was in the process of immediate unloading by the British personnel, but in the meantime no Greek port authority was aware of its dangerous cargo; the Luftwaffe was able to find it quicker than the Greeks. Thus the blame must lie with the British which tended to keep all information strictly to themselves. (64)

Once again the Allies, had behaved naively, because they had had only one major port for disembarkation of men and material. Allied mutual recriminations did not help the situation at all. In addition to the devastation of Piraeus, when the harbour reopened after ten days with an inadequate service, it was also mined with magnetic mines dropped by German planes, which the Greek navy did not know how to de-activate. They had to wait for the British to do so.

6g) The Central Macedonian Front (C.M.F.)

During the German attack on Eastern Macedonia, the Greek General Staff, alarmed by the prospect of a wide German sweep into the south of Greece and Central Macedonia, decided to shift the Anglo-Greek position on the Aliakmon line, between Mount Kaimaktsalan and Lake Vegoritida, to have the Allies face more to the north to block the gap between Vevi and Lake Megali Prespa. The danger lay in the German advance to the Aliakmon, which would have
threatened the rear of the Greek army in Albania and the
left flank of the Allies in the Aliakmon line. Subsequently on
8th April, Athens ordered the Wilson Force to abandon its
position north of Kaimaktsalan and occupy a new line, the
Kirli Derven Straits (Kledi) up to Mount Nympheon with the
simultaneous advance of the 1st British Armoured Brigade
towards Monastir, to delay the enemy advancing from there,
until the withdrawal from that line was completed.

The Greek Cavalry Division which was temporarily assigned
to W.M.A. was ordered to proceed to Florina. The Cavalry
Division was reinforced by the XXI Infantry Brigade, which
was constituted in March 1941, with one infantry regiment
(the 88th), one machine-gun battalion and two artillery
batteries. The Western Macedonia Army (W.M.A) was ordered
to re-adjust its position from the Olympus-Vermion line to
Mount Varnous in order to align itself with the rest of the
Anglo-Greek forces. Its aim was to cover the northern side of
Varnous-Verno mountains up to Mount Nympheon.

The Wilson Force was positioned on the line Kledi- Lake
Vegoritida-Vermion-Olympus. The Kledi position was
entrusted to a number of forces under Major-General
Mackay, with the 16th Australian Brigade; the 1st British
Armoured Brigade as a reserve on that lake; the XX Greek
Infantry Division, ordered to cover the left of the lake and
deny the enemy the road to Edessa from the west; the XII
Greek Infantry Division, tactically allotted to the 1st
Australian Corps, and placed in the Hadova defile and the
Dodecanese Regiment which was hesitant to withdraw to
new positions without giving battle where it stood, but was
finally deployed in the Vevi-Kledi position. (65)

The new deployment of the Anglo-Greek forces in their
position in the Vermion sector was the following: on the left
the Cavalry Division (under the W.M.A.) in the Pisoderi pass,
then the Mackay Force in the Kledi defile with the XX Greek
Infantry Division (under the C.M.A.) to the east as far as the
Agra pass north-west of Edessa. To their right were deployed
the Ist Australian Corps with the 2nd New Zealand Infantry Division on the passes of Olympus, the 16th Australian Brigade south of Vermion and the XII Greek Infantry Division in the Hadova defile. Unfortunately, the front extended for 170 km, too long to be covered by these scanty forces which had no reserves to bring up if an enemy breakthrough occurred. See Maps 10, 11, 13, 17, 18, 19.

The Allied force was not just extended, but also suffered from a multiplicity of chains of command. The majority of the British were under Wilson's orders, but the Greek Cavalry Division was under the W.M.A. and the XX Greek Infantry Division under the C.M.A. However, all these confusingly mingled Allied forces were supposed to form one coherent, unified front. Wilson had many well-founded doubts about the fighting value of the Greek XX and XII Infantry Divisions, and of the Cavalry Division on the far left, which was dangerously extended. The Germans could attack that division, destroy it, and reach Kastoria or Janina. The morale of the Greek divisions was doubtful after the fall of Salonika. Rumours that the Germans had allowed captured Greek soldiers to go back to their homes, and the tremendous reputation of the invincibility of the German army, caused some of the soldiers of the 3rd Cavalry Regiment desert. (66) The retreat of the Dodecanese Regiment over mountainous terrain, mostly on foot, had affected its spirit, and the tactical allocation of the XII Greek Infantry Division to Blamey, a foreign commander, did not improve the situation. Finally, the Vevi position was too extended to be held by three infantry battalions, though the additional support of three artillery regiments made up the deficiency somewhat. Allied anti-tank guns were placed on forward slopes, endangering their survivability if discovered by the enemy and causing problems with their lack of any camouflage. The difficult country created problems with its deficient communications and transport system, and the infiltration of some English-speaking
Germans in Greek uniforms added to the problems of Allied defence. (67)

The Imperial force was not even complete. The 6th Australian Infantry Division had not all arrived. Part of it was still on the way from Alexandria. The deficiencies and vulnerability of Greek infrastructure were such that the new elements of that division might not ever reach the front. The single railway line leading to the north was collapsing, resulting in a total bottleneck of Allied supplies. This faced Wilson with a dilemma, whether to wait for the first contact with the enemy where he was, or to retire further south to a shorter and more natural defensive line. He decided in favour of the latter. He ordered the immediate withdrawal of the forces to the line Olympus, Mount Vourinos, Mount Siniatsiko. Wilson believed that this line had a better chance of being held provided the Greek divisions did not collapse.

He was afraid that the constant withdrawal to the south, exposing more of Greece to the enemy, would soon influence Greek morale negatively, if it was not already doing so. Wilson believed that possible low morale among the Greeks would imperil his new position as well. If such a problem developed, the flank of the Allied troops would be endangered. The two Greek infantry divisions the XX and XII, were to be positioned at the Siatista, Klisura (in Greece) and Vlasti defiles. If they were to crack under enemy pressure, the Australians entrusted with guarding the Servia passes would be in grave danger. The decision to retreat again, to the Olympus-Siniatsiko line, was approved by Papagos on 11th April when he met Wilson in Farsala. It was expected that the two Greek divisions would take at least 3-4 days to pull back if unmolested. (68)

6h) The Albanian Theatre of War

While that situation was developing in Eastern and Central Macedonia, a new dramatic phase was to start in Albania.
Under the agreement between Papagos and the Yugoslav representatives at Kenali railway station on 4th April, the W.M.A. and the Epirus Army (E.A.) were to commence joint offensive operations with Yugoslav forces against the Italians in Albania. See Maps 10,11,13,18,19

From the end of the Italian spring offensive at the end of March 1941 until the German attack on Greece, the Albanian front remained largely uneventful, with the exception of a few local Greek attacks and some exchanges of artillery fire. The disposition of the W.M.A. at this time was as follows: the XIII Infantry Division in Pogradec at the eastern end, the IX Infantry Division to its west on Mount Kamia; the X Infantry Division to the south-west on the River Devoli in the Grampora area, the XVI Infantry Division on Mount Tomoritsa and west of River Devoli and up to Mount Tomor; and the Cavalry Division north-east of Koritsa. Altogether the W.M.A. comprised around 35 first and second line battalions.

The XVI Infantry Division decided on a local attack by the 1st Infantry Regiment to capture an enemy outpost at Teke position. The attack was to be led by an infantry company with the support of two mountain artillery sections with 75mm and 65mm guns plus a machine-gun platoon and automatic rifle support. The enemy position was held by an Alpini battalion of the Pusteria Division. The attack at first met with stubborn Italian resistance, but after the Greeks had been reinforced by two platoons, they attacked with fixed bayonets and captured the whole enemy position.

The IX Infantry Division undertook a similar local attack against the Mnema Graias heights. The operation was carried by the 27th Infantry Regiment supported by three artillery sections. The assault was launched and the first height was taken by the Greeks. Suddenly a strong Italian attack from hill 1876 pushed back the Greek company and directed its fire at other hills as well. During the evening a fresh Greek attempt was made, to re-take 1876. Though the enemy had stubbornly defended this hill it was later taken. A follow-up
Greek assault against the other hills, was cancelled due to shortage of ammunition. Another infantry regiment, the 32nd, made an attack on hill 1143 and captured that.(69)

The aim of the Greek strategy now shifted to cooperation with the Yugoslavs. The W.M.A. would unleash an attack in the direction Koritsa-Elbasan-Durazzo with the Yugoslavs attacking on a front from Debar to Struga towards Elbasan. The E.A., due to a delay in preparing for its offensive, was to attack a little later in the direction of Valona and Durazzo with aim to capture Berat and Valona. From 6th April, the W.M.A. tried in vain to contact the Yugoslav army in Monastir. Due to the lack of information, an officer was then sent to Monastir and from there to Skopje to report on the Yugoslav activities and coordinate their attack.

On 7th April, the W.M.A. contacted General Avakumovic, Chief of Staff of the Yugoslav Tetovo Army. In a telephone conversation with the Chief of Staff of W.M.A., Avakumovic said that the Yugoslavs would launch an attack towards Mount Than and the Greeks should attack in the direction of Tservenakia and Than in support of the Yugoslav offensive. His Greek counterpart agreed to that, though he knew that the Greek attack would have to be made frontally against an enemy superior in numbers and equipment in a very well-fortified position with a series of defence lines.(70)

Two Greek infantry divisions, the IX and XIII, would lead the attack to a depth of six kilometres. The attack was launched with the XIII leading. The Greek battalions managed with great losses to occupy part of their objectives, though the enemy had wisely anticipated the Greek offensive and had subjected the Greek positions to artillery fire all day. The next day, the two Greek divisions were to coordinate their activities. However, the Yugoslav response did not come. With the exception of some sporadic Yugoslav artillery fire in the direction of Lin, the Yugoslavs did not implement their attack. The Greek liaison in Skopje reported that the situation in Monastir was chaotic and panic
prevailed. Later that day, the Chief of Staff of W.M.A. called Tetovo and spoke to Avakumovic who assured him that the Yugoslav Struga Division would soon attack. The Yugoslav divisional commander contacted the Greek Chief of Staff and told him that a local attack would be launched towards Tha, with only one infantry battalion and even less artillery, because his division was still in the process of mobilisation.

Accordingly, small scale Yugoslav artillery and mortar fire was heard on the evening of 7th April but half an hour later it ceased altogether. Both Struga and Monastir were out of reach and the W.M.A was informed that Yugoslav morale had collapsed and that the Yugoslav forces had disintegrated. On 8th April, the W.M.A. received fresh news about the Yugoslav condition in the south, to the effect that the Yugoslav army had dissolved, its troops were in disorder and panic and confusion were widespread in Struga. The W.M.A. decided to postpone any further offensive action, since it could no longer rely on the Yugoslav assistance. Thus both the XIII and IX were ordered to assume a defensive posture again. On 9th April, a new officer, Major Theodosis Papathanasiades, was sent to the Yugoslav General Staff to persuade the Yugoslavs to attack in Albania and to stress that the German army must not be allowed to link up with its ally at Lake Achrida. The Greek major informed the Yugoslavs that their dispositions at Strumitza and Monastir were opening up the possibility of a German attack on the Kirli Derven-Vermion front.

The Greek officer reached Sarajevo on the 11th. He saw General Simovic on the 13th, informing him of Papagos' wish that the Yugoslav attack on the Italians be stepped up and attempting to persuade him that any Yugoslav delay in attacking the Italian army would prevent the Yugoslav army from establishing any route into Albania, which would be the only exit for the Yugoslavs if the Germans had occupied their country. Papathanasiades got an unfavourable impression of the Yugoslav army. He understood that the Yugoslav Staff
was pre-occupied by the adverse situation developing on its right, rather than by the Albanian front and anyway did not possess any substantial forces in the west which could have changed the situation even if it had decided to intervene decisively in Albania. See Maps 10,11,13,18,19

The war situation in Sarajevo while Papathanasiades was there became less promising every day. It seemed that the Croats had revolted and deserted from the Yugoslav army. Papathanasiades returned to Greece on 14th April and reported to Papagos on the situation, commenting that the Yugoslav position was irretrievable and that Papagos should not expect the slightest help from the Yugoslav army.(73)

As the hours passed, the Yugoslav catastrophe started to reveal its magnitude and confirm Papathanasiades' report. Masses of Yugoslav refugees and soldiers started to arrive in Florina and other parts of Greece. Most of them carried their personal arms. Six Yugoslav generals and a number of other officers had arrived in Greece among the escapees. All the incoming Yugoslav deserters and/or escapees informed the Greek authorities that the Yugoslav General Staff was misinformed about the state of its forces and confused, that the Yugoslav army had disintegrated, that the Yugoslav forces in the southeast, forces in which the Greeks were particularly interested, had been annihilated and that the Germans were moving freely through Monastir into Greece.

The Greek General Staff immediately ordered that all able-bodied Yugoslav troops be employed in the Greek army together with their equipment, including three tanks and four anti-aircraft guns, and the rest should be guarded and isolated so that they could not spread rumours and confusion among the Greeks. The road from Monastir to Greece was wide open. There were no Allied forces to block the Germans' way and had it not been for a small British patrol destroying bridges and carrying out other demolitions the Germans might have been in Florina already.(74)
It was proved therefore that Papagos' constant reliance on the Yugoslav army was nothing more than wishful thinking. When it came to battle the Yugoslav army became a disorganised rabble on which the Greeks could not rely. In addition, a large mutiny by Croats in the Yugoslav army had taken place which had intensified and hastened the dissolution and destruction of the Yugoslav army. Papagos seemed as he had not reckoned that possibility at all, though he should have done so. The arguments which Papagos had advanced in his talks with the British, in February and March 1941, about the choice of defence line in Greece, were shattered. If the British had listened to Papagos, and had transported the whole of their forces to Eastern Macedonia and with the Greeks had established a line covering Salonika then the whole of the Allied campaign in Greece would have probably ended along with the end of the E.M.A.

Naval Activity April 1941

Before and during the German invasion on Greece, the Greek navy undaunted by the might of the German airforce had continued unhesitatingly with the transportation of vital supplies and stores to and from the front. On 2nd April, the transport ship Macedonia moved 400 officers from Skyros to Piraeus. On 9th April, the troop-ships, Corinth, Elsi and Frinton escorted by four destroyers moved 650 Italian prisoners from Piraeus to Crete. There, the ships embarked 1,250 officers from Suda Bay and 2,020 from Iraklion and transported them to Piraeus. On another trip, the Elsi took 1,000 gendarmes to Crete, escorted by the destroyer Hydra. This was done in order to reinforce the island's garrison, since Crete had been denuded of any significant military formation.

Between 9th April and the 11th the destroyers Psara and Kountouriotis, escorted the cargo ships Ther. Nomikou, Varvara, Aghios Georgios and Eugene to the Dardanelles, and
the ships *Kehren* and *Retriever* back without loss. On 14th and 15th April, the destroyer *Kountouriotis* sailed from Megara to Euboea and escorted the British ships, *Destro* and *Port Halifax*. Though attacked by bombers, they did not suffer any damage. On 19th April, the same destroyer escorted a convoy from Nauplion to Suda together with the torpedo-boats *Nike* and *Aspida*. At Suda the merchant ship *Ithaki* was heavily bombed and sunk. However between the beginning of the British landing in Greece and the start of the German invasion, the Greek navy had transported without a single loss 34,525 men and 1,803 pack-animals (mules, horses, donkeys), apart from tons of stores, supplies and military equipment, Greek wounded, Italian prisoners, etc. (75)

The Greek mobilisation and transportation - though more difficult than before and in the imminent danger of breakdown, due to the presence of two powerful enemy air forces - carried on owing to the courage of the Greek navy. What Compton Mackenzie said of the Greek mobilisation of October 1940, partially applies also in April 1941: "the Greek mobilisation and transportation was admirable. The Greeks before beating the Italians, have beaten time." (76)
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Chapter 7
No Way Out

7a) Nearing the End

With the capitulation of the Eastern Macedonian Army, the collapse of the Yugoslav resistance in the south and the subsequent withdrawal of the Wilson Force to the Olympus-Vourinos-Siniatsiko line, the Germans were given a free hand in deciding their next tactical manoeuvre in pursuit of the Allies in Central Macedonia and the Greeks in Albania. The continuous retreat of the Allies in Central Macedonia revealed a new mortal danger. The retreat of the Allies exposed their left (western) flank to attack by the advancing Germans, but also the right flank (eastern) of the Greek army in Albania. As the Allies withdrew further to the south, the gap between their left and the right of the Greek army in Albania grew even wider. The danger lay in the Germans moving through the gap between the two flanks, driving a wedge between them and thus creating two separate fronts.

This raised the danger for the Greek army in Albania that it would be isolated from the retreating Allies and unable to link up with them to form a unified front. All it could do then was wait to be captured. The Allies, too, would be faced not only with a frontal German attack on their new position but with an outflanking movement, since their left would not be protected by the right of the Greek army in Albania and their whole new position would be fragile.

That was precisely what List had in mind: the creation of a gap between the Allies and the Greeks. The full weight of the German air force, which flew almost unhindered, certainly speeded up List's simple plan. For this purpose, List divided his forces anew. He transferred the 5th Armoured Division of Kleist's 1st Panzergruppe, to the XL Armoured Corps. That armoured division, previously part of the XIV Armoured Corps operating in Yugoslavia, was to move on Florina.
List divided his forces into two operational groups: the western group with the XL Armoured Corps, under Lieutenant-General Stumme with the 5th and 9th Armoured Divisions, the 73rd Infantry Division and the SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler Reinforced Motorized Infantry Regiment. That group would advance through Florina towards Larissa as far as Grevena and Metsovon. The aim of this group was to interpose itself in the gap between the Greeks in Albania and Wilson’s forces. That would produce a rout of the Greeks in Albania. The 9th Armoured Division, was to move separately to Kozani and attack the British at Siniatsiko. The eastern group with the XVIII Mountain Army Corps under Lieutenant-General Boehme with the 2nd Armoured division, the 5th and 6th Mountain Divisions, and the 72nd Infantry Division, were to advance from Salonika to Litohoro. (1) At that time the SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler was in the process of becoming a full division, which was completed when it was transferred to Russia.

On 10th April the Germans linked up with the Italians at Lake Achrida in Yugoslavia. What Papagos feared most had happened. On 10th April also, the Greek Cavalry Division was engaged on the Pisoderi-Florina road by German motorized forces, which were temporarily halted by its 3rd Cavalry Regiment. During the night the enemy made an effort to break through again using artillery, mortars and automatic fire with tracer bullets, but failed again. The XL Corps turned to the Kledi position. On 10th April elements of it came within artillery range of the Australians and the British and were shelled. At least two German tanks were destroyed. The weather was very bad with piercing cold, and continuous snow. That prevented somewhat the dominant Luftwaffe from hurting the Allies. (2) See Maps 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19

On 11th April German pressure on Kledi increased and the British opened fire with their anti-tank guns, knocking out some German tanks. The Germans returned fire with artillery guns and mortars and the British position soon became
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untenable. The German attack continued with two infantry battalions and, indifferent to casualties, they made some small progress against the Australians. German prisoners indicated that the Australians were up against the SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler. The British had lost 7 cruiser tanks through mechanical breakdown and track troubles, but the Germans did not press their attack any further and the Allied position remained unchanged.

Papagos that day considered the retreat of the Greek army in Albania. Wavell upon his arrival in Athens brought only bad news. No more British troops would be available for Greece. Rommel had taken El Agheila on 24th March, Benghazi and Derna a little later and seemed on his way to Suez. Wavell and Wilson decided that the withdrawal from Vermion and Siniatsiko had to start right away. In a commemoration of the Mediterranean battles of World War I, but possibly in order to raise the morale of the Commonwealth forces, Wavell decided to unite the Australians and the New Zealanders in the historic Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (Anzacs).(3) However, everyone must have wished that there would be no repetition of the Gallipoli campaign.

Early next day, the SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler made a frontal attack across ground covered by new snow, supported by mortars, artillery and machine-guns. The Germans pressed forward at the most fragile point of the line, the link between an Australian battalion and the British Rangers. At 1100 German tanks and infantry cut through the Allied resistance and outflanked the Australians, who nevertheless continued fighting, though the British had thought that they had withdrawn since their position had been outflanked. In the evening the Australians were attacked twice by German infantry and tanks and this time had to give way. The Australians were retreating in disorder because the German tanks had broken through in great depth and had caused
serious damage. The Australian retreat was so confused that many soldiers threw away their weapons. (4)

To the west, the Germans launched an attack on the sector of the Greek XXI Infantry Brigade with artillery and mortars. For almost six hours a single Greek battalion was attacked by two German ones. The Greek sustained heavy losses, while the remaining men were dispersed in the nearby forest of Radosi. In the area of Proastion, the 1st British Armoured Brigade had fought the first and last tank battle in Greece against a column of German tanks of the 9th Armoured Division (around 30 medium and light tanks) supported by motor-cyclists and the Luftwaffe. The British position was supported by accurate artillery and anti-tank fire and managed to halt the Germans and later on to force them to retire.

Though the British force was inferior in quality and quantity since its light tanks and Bren carriers could not stand up to the German Mark I, II and IIIs, they succeeded in disengaging themselves from the Proastion position under cover of shellfire, moving to Kozani and from there to Grevena by 14th April. It is estimated that the German tank losses were between 5 and 8 tanks whereas the British lost around 30, and also some anti-tank guns. It was a spirited British action beyond praise. The British artillery and anti-tank gunners had remained in their position firing at the enemy until the night, although they had been outflanked by the enemy.

The German tank commander thought that he had been facing a complete British tank division. Buckley says that this was a true compliment. The Dodecanese Regiment was also attacked and had to retreat to Amynteion. The retreat was a difficult one, since the regiment was retiring on foot, hastily, under intense artillery and mortar fire, in a very rocky and mountainous area. For a time, the Australians to their left thought that they had disintegrated since, they
were moving in disorder and out of step, but they had not
been defeated. (5)

The local British tactical victory, secured by halting the
German tanks, was a costly one. The 1st British Armoured
Brigade had lost a significant part of its armour. Buckley
says that the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment had only 13 Cruiser
tanks left, most of its losses due to broken tracks. The 4th
Hussars had been left with 40 tanks and the Northumberland
Hussars had only six anti-tank guns. The 1st Rangers were
down to half their initial strength, while the 2nd Royal Horse
Artillery (R.H.A.) had abandoned one motor-cycle and four
vehicles. It was a timely but Pyrrhic victory. Unlike the
Germans, the British could not replace their losses. (6)

On 12th April Palairet sent a message to London indicating
that Wavell saw Papagos ill and depressed because of the
imminent German breakthrough on the left of the Allied
position, before he had had time to withdraw his troops from
Albania. The Greek Premier, however, was determined to
fight on, even if he had to take his Government to Crete. The
situation in Athens was critical. Churchill replied that he was
happy to see some vigorous attitude adopted by the Greeks
and their determination not to leave Athens for the moment.
He even promised that in case of a forced departure, the
Greek Government could always move to Cyprus, a promise
which was later on revoked. (7)

However when Wavell returned to Egypt, Admiral
Cunningham went ahead with planning the evacuation from
Greece as soon as possible. The evacuation of the Vermion
position, as we will see, turned out to be a tragic event. So
far, the British Expeditionary Force had fought the Germans
only on a small scale. Most of the Imperial troops had been
fighting small tactical battles without aiming to halt the
Germans, if it were possible. Since the opening of the
campaign the Anglo-Greek forces in Central Macedonia had
been forced to withdraw twice, from the Aliakmon to
Vermion and from there to Siniatsiko.
The Imperial forces in Greece were fighting a continuous rearguard action in central Greece with no chance of taking to the offensive given the overwhelming disparity of the opposing forces and their own lack of strong air support. This British pattern continued, with more retreats to come, until the final evacuation. The Aliakmon position, the first to be abandoned, was the favourite of the British as had emerged during the talks in February and March 1941. This was a weakly-fortified line but a naturally strong one and was well supported. However the Wilson Force had decided to abandon it so easily that anyone would have been amazed by the speed of its retreat.

Most of all, Aliakmon had been abandoned with all its valuable equipment and with the fortifications intact. This left a deep psychological effect on the Greeks who must in retrospect have been bewildered by the British arguments in favour of the Aliakmon position in February and March 1941. On the one hand, the British had argued with the Greeks for the Aliakmon as the best defence line; on the other when the Greeks after a myriad of arguments and disagreements decided to please the British by half-heartedly adopting that line, they found that its fervent supporters were the first to abandon it when it came to battle. This did not help in raising Greek morale; the British display of lack of fighting spirit certainly played a part.

The retreat to the Siniatsiko-Vourinos-Olympus position was for most of the forces to start on 12th April as it had been agreed between Wilson and Papagos at Farsala on 11th. The disposition of the Allied forces in the withdrawal was as follows: the British forces were to take over the area from the River Platamon to the bend in the River Aliakmon. The Greek XII and XX Divisions were to occupy the Vermion-Siniatsiko area, while the Greek Cavalry Division and the XXI Infantry Brigade were to remain temporarily in their positions on Mounts Varnous and Verno. The XII Division was to be restored to the C.M.A. after its arrival at its
destination. The Mackay Force would cover the withdrawal of the XII and XX from the Kledi position and would then retire to its previous line, delaying the enemy.

The withdrawal had to be unmolested by the enemy. The retreat of the two Greek divisions proved to be very difficult. It was made mostly on ox-carts and horse-drawn transportation, and under constant enemy harassment, though those two divisions needed to withdraw quickly. However, the British could move faster and more safely with their motor transport. When the two large Greek formations, including the Dodecanese Regiment, reached their destination they were far from being battle-worthy units. Their retreat started on 11th April under appalling weather conditions, over a very rocky and almost inaccessible terrain, and became unprecedentedly difficult even though the British offered some cars. The Greeks had to cover a distance of over 80 km in terrible cold and snow. Adding to their existing difficulties, on 12th April, Wilson ordered that their pace be increased. The Wilson Force believed that the British rearguard tank battle at Kledi and Proastion had only stalled the enemy, and that the Germans would soon be on the tail of these two Greek units. See Maps 10,11,13,15,17,18,19

Thus the XII and XX Divisions and the Dodecanese Regiment duly speeded up their withdrawal. Soon their retreat ended in collapse. Most of the divisional forces were dispersed or cut off, other smaller parts were left behind or lost, some of the equipment was abandoned in their hasty retreat to escape from the enemy. The links between the battalions were, in some cases, lost. Most of the troops were tired and exhausted, filled with defeatism and discomfort, confusion, depression; and in some units mass desertion became a common thing. By the time some of the remnants of these units reached their line, their strength had been whittled anyway to insignificance, their equipment and armament lost, abandoned, destroyed.(8)
Throwing the blame on each other became the pattern of the relationships between the Allies. Papagos says that though the British forces fighting in Kledi had not yet been crushed, and should have covered the withdrawal of the Greek units as agreed at Farsala, the Wilson ordered the hasty retreat of all the forces, with the result that the two Greek units faced an impossible task, without having the enemy on their heels. The disorder and confusion was so great, that only fractions of the XX and XII Divisions and the Dodecanese Regiment reached the new line. Similarly the British did not provide the promised number of trucks to facilitate their retreat.

Thus some motorised Greek formations moved faster, others on foot were slower, others did not move at all, waiting for the promised but non-existent trucks. Also additional destruction of Greek units was caused when the retreat took place, because Wilson did not take into consideration that the Greek Cavalry Division and the XXI Infantry Brigade were on the left of the British at Kledi, and therefore he did not warn them about his hasty withdrawal. The latter brigade therefore met a surprise attack by the enemy, because the British had left that route open. The Greeks were cut to pieces.(9)

The British say that the Greeks did not plan the retreat of the XII and XX Divisions properly. According to British records, the C.M.A. failed in every respect to execute an orderly withdrawal. The Greek units were disorganised and indescribably mingled. They resembled a rabble. The Greek formations disintegrated and their officers never regained control of the formations after the withdrawal to Vermion. The only thing they cared about was to reach Athens, as fast as they could. The British War Office records show that only the Greek army units under British or Commonwealth command retained some slight semblance of military order.(10)
Gavin Long says that the Greeks' troops were set too difficult tasks and were ordered to withdraw very late and that:

"...liaison with their staffs was lamentably weak and left much room for misunderstanding. The British and Greek forces spoke different languages not only in the literal sense but in the sense that one was a highly-mobile, expertly-staffed army and the other an army of foot-soldiers served by pack animals.... The Greek troops generally seemed dogged and capable of great endurance, and likely to arrive at their destination and make a good stand there." (11)

The Allies' situation was critical. Though they had managed to extricate themselves from Vermion, the actual Allied force that had withdrawn was insignificant. The Central Macedonia Army (C.M.A.) had ceased to exist. However, the XX and XII Divisions were placed at the Chromion-Siatista and Vlasti-Klisura passes. The 5th New Zealand Brigade was positioned in the Petra pass. The 2nd New Zealand Division, in the Servia and Portas passes supported by three field artillery regiments. The 18th Australian Brigade was to the west of Servia, on the west bank of the Aliakmon reinforced by the 26th New Zealand Battalion. The 1st British Armoured Brigade was in Grevena as a reserve unit plus the 6th New Zealand Brigade in Elsson. (12)

Even the new defence line was not secure. The Germans could attack it by using the roads which led to the upper Aliakmon valley to reach the road to Koritsa from Kalabaka. That road was the only route for supplies from Kozani and Florina to the Western Macedonia Army (W.M.A.) and C.M.A. Wilson feared that the left of the weak Greek divisions was endangered, for the Germans could attack in the Pindus and attempt to occupy Grevena and Janina. Wilson therefore decided that a further withdrawal was necessary to a line which would be shorter in length and defended, if possible, only by British troops. That was the Thermopylae line, 160
km to the south. He therefore despatched a force comprising two battalions, newly arrived in Greece as part of the 17th Australian Brigade and led by Brigadier S.G Savige, to Kalabaka to block the roads leading through Janina and Metsovon to the Plain of Thessaly.

Wilson’s decision was bold but one-sided. He expected that the weak remnants of the C.M.A, which had just taken a rest in the Olympus-Siniatsiko position, again to initiate the retreat. Wilson clearly did not trust the Greek army at all and that is why he wished to reach a position which could be defended by Imperial troops alone without having to rely on the doubtful Greek soldiers. Information from Albania seemed to point to some Greek units being reluctant to fight anymore. Wilson went so far as to order that the Greek units should not in their retreat obstruct or delay the withdrawal of the British troops and that the latter should be allowed to retreat first. Wilson’s concern was only for the one Ally, his Imperial troops. The British command in general was lacking in confidence in the Greek army and that had been shown quite clearly. But this belief was not always justified.

The British were comparing their mechanised, disciplined and well-trained army with a Greek force which was far less equipped and prepared from the start. The British were also making an unjust comparison between their newly arrived and well-supplied soldiers and the Greeks, who had been fighting continuously for the last six months first against one Axis partner and now against two. Yet the British still expected the Greek’s performance to be as good as new. When the Thermopylae line ultimately broke, this was not due to the Greeks; as Gavin Long comments:

“Lack of confidence in the Greeks, established in the minds of the British and Dominion commanders before the fighting opened, strongly influenced the conduct of the campaign. General Wilson decided to withdraw from the Aliakmon position because, he believed, the Greeks had disintegrated on his left. It has been seen, however, that the more
dangerous breach of the Allied line occurred not in the Greek sector, on the left, but on the right of the Anzac Corps. That Corps was not strong enough to hold the Olympus-Aliakmon line against the forces which the Germans could bring against them. Later on, when the British force retired and occupied the Thermopylae position and the Greek army in Epirus surrendered the capitulation of that army was given as reason why the Thermopylae position would be untenable. Actually no threat to the Anzac force developed from that flank, and whatever happened in Epirus, the Thermopylae position could not have been held against List's army by the depleted Anzac Corps. It was regrettable that efforts were made to place responsibility for failure on the Greeks who had fought well against the Italians and the Germans. (14)

The German XVIII Mountain Army Corps with the 2nd Armoured Division, the 5th and 6th Gebirgsjäger Divisions, and the 72nd Infantry Division were to go to Veria. On 11th April the 6th Mountain Division crossed the River Axios and moved to Edessa. The 2nd Armoured, the 5th Mountain and the 72nd Infantry Division were ordered to pursue the British. The XVIII Mountain Army Corps was ordered to despatch elements of the 2nd Armoured to Petra and from there to Elasson to attack the rear of the Imperial troops opposite the XI Armoured Corps. Other parts of the 2nd Armoured, were to advance to Panteleimon and through the valley of Tempe to Larissa. The 6th Mountain Division was to launch an attack on the eastern slopes of Olympus. (15)

The SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler and elements of the 9th Armoured, attacked the Klisura, (in Greece) Vlasti and Siatista corridors and managed by the end of 14th April to break through Klisura since the remnants of the Greek XX Division were unable to stop them. The opening up of Klisura allowed the Germans to pour south-west and cut off the remaining Greek forces of the C.M.A. east of the Aliakmon, forcing them to capitulate. The Greek forces in Klisura were fighting an enemy who enjoyed absolute air supremacy with no opponent in the air and no anti-aircraft guns to disturb
him. The Commander-in-Chief of C.M.A., Major-General Christopher Karasos, reported to Wilson his inability to hold the line any longer and requested immediate assistance from British tanks. It is important to add that Major-General Karasos had replaced Lieutenant-General John Kotulas in command of C.M.A. on 9th April following Wilson's appeal to the Greek General Staff. See Maps 10, 11, 13, 15, 18, 19

Though Wilson ordered the 1st British Armoured Brigade to assist, Charrington claimed that his tanks were unfit for battle and refused Wilson's order. Charrington's excuse was that his remaining tanks were few and had already been overused. He hesitated to order any further use of them, before the crews had had a respite unless the need for them was absolutely compelling. Up to now the withdrawal of the C.M.A. and of the 1st British Armoured Brigade had been more or less successful. Late on 13th April, the Germans were stalled from taking any of the bridges on the Aliakmon until the remnants of the Greek XX and XII Divisions had escaped to the east of the river and the British brigade to Kalabaka. The German 9th Armoured Division reached Kozani on 14th April and heavy artillery opened fire on the few Greek positions and, after annihilating the Greek artillery which had fired 40 unexploded shells, caused havoc to the Greek infantry.

The Greek soldiers were seized by panic and confusion and left their posts. Thus the XII Greek Division received an additional serious blow. It was then reduced to around 1000 men, under 400 per battalion. The C.M.A. had failed completely to fulfil its task, to provide the vital link between the Greeks in Albania and the Allies as they withdrew. Its commander was out of touch with his forces (we will find out at later on why), the contact between the right of the W.M.A. and the left of the Wilson Force had utterly broken down, and the C.M.A. did not have any real fighting value anymore. Its remnants, from the XX and XII Infantry Divisions, were virtually all lost, destroyed,
captured or dissolved, and the Greek Headquarters decided to incorporate what was left into the W.M.A.

The Germans had almost fully succeeded in placing themselves between the Allies, signifying the end of the contact between the Greeks in Albania and the Allies in Central Macedonia. From now onwards each front would be on its own, unsupported by the other. Moreover, Anglo-Greek relations were strained. During the withdrawal of the C.M.A. the 1st British Armoured Brigade planned to blow up the bridges on the Aliakmon, even if it meant trapping the Greek units behind them. The Greeks were forced to man the bridges with orders to shoot the British if they tried to blow them.(17)

On the morning of 15th April, the Germans attacked the 6th Australian Division, who managed to repel all the attacks and hold their positions. Meanwhile the 1st British Brigade retreated from Grevena to Kalabaka. The brigade was subjected at first to a heavy dive-bombing attack and shot down two of the planes. It continued its retreat on a road congested with refugees, Yugoslavs, Greeks, retreating troops, deserters, wounded and prisoners. The scene resembled a bazaar more than a road. See Maps 10,11,17,18,19

Those conditions caused considerable delay to its movement. In 16 hours, the British had travelled only 19 km. Fortunately, Luftwaffe activity slowed down for a time, and when it was resumed, the mountain terrain of the country provided excellent cover for the troops. However, by the time it reached Brigadier Savige's Force in Kalabaka, the British Armoured Brigade was armoured only in name. The 3rd Armoured Regiment had only three tanks out of its original 56. The 4th Hussars, equipped with 52 light tanks (cruisers), had lost half of them. The Rangers, equipped with 44, had also lost half and half of their men too.(18)

Meanwhile Lieutenant-General Stumme decided to outflank the New Zealanders in the Aliakmon position with the 5th Armoured Division, and to pursue the retiring 1st British
Armoured Brigade into Kalabaka. On 15th April, Grevena fell to the 5th and it continued its chase towards the River Venetikos where the road was so destroyed by British demolitions and Luftwaffe bombing that the Germans had to stop. The XVIII Mountain Army Corps decided to shift its effort to the south with the objective of capturing the line Olympus-Petra pass-River Platamon-Tempe and invading the Plain of Thessaly. Simultaneously, a regiment of the 2nd Armoured Division and a motor-cycle battalion of the 72nd Infantry were to make a flank approach towards the Servia passes, by going through the Hadova defile.

The 2nd Armoured Division attacked the New Zealand positions on the River Platamon. The Germans, under heavy artillery and mortar fire, attempted a crossing of the river but the Allies defended their positions and inflicted serious losses on the enemy. Finally, however, German pressure won and after crossing the river they took Katerini, forcing the New Zealanders to retire. The danger now was that the Platamon-Tempe-Larissa front would succumb to the enemy attack. The German 6th and 5th Mountain Divisions attacked the 2nd New Zealand. On 16th April, the 6th Mountain Division carried out both a frontal and a flanking move against the New Zealanders.

The Germans charged with two infantry battalions, supported by 12 105mm guns, 4 150mm guns and around 100 tanks. The pressure on the Allies was such that the left of the New Zealand line broke and German tanks poured through. The Allies had underestimated the Germans' tank abilities on rocky terrain. However, German tank losses were around 20. The Germans also attacked the Petras pass, held by the 22nd, 23rd and 28th Maori battalions of the 5th New Zealand Brigade. The initial German attack with tanks, mortars, automatic weapons and vehicles failed, because the Maoris fought bravely, destroying 8 tanks and firing 3000 rounds. Later on, under the cover of rain and fog, the enemy
managed to advance close to the three Maoris battalions. (20)

Though the brigade was ordered to retire, it did not do so and the German attempts to break through the Maoris failed. Elements of the Maoris started to withdraw, losing 7 47mm anti-tank guns and 20 lorries, plus anything else the men could not carry with them. Servia was held by the 4th New Zealand Brigade against attacks by elements of the 9th Armoured Division and bombed by 14 German planes against which they had only 8 anti-aircraft guns. The attack failed and the Germans had to surrender. The New Zealand mortar and automatic weapons fire decimated the attacking Germans, who lost almost all of their three leading companies.

The situation of the Anzacs on 16th April was insecure. The east bank of the River Platamon was in peril while the west bank still held but with doubtful prospects. The retreat to the Thermopylae line became necessary and the Allies started to leave the Olympus-Siniatsiko position on the night of 15th April. However Wilson had acted on his own, without consulting Papagos. Papagos learnt and approved of Wilson's decision on 16th. (21)

Air Activity 10th-16th April

The most important air events of that period are as follows. Early on 10th April, 9 Blenheims of No.84 Squadron raided enemy columns in the Prilep-Monastir area. Later on, another contingent of 15 Blenheims of Nos. 30 and 11 Squadrons attacked the same target also. Escorted by Hurricanes they met Messerschmitt Bf109s and 110s. One 110 and one 109 were lost, with no losses to the R.A.F. The seaplanes at Paramythia airbase, reinforced by six new Swordfish from the aircraft carrier Formidable attacked Valona harbour and sank four ships. The Fliegerkorps X from Sicily raided Greek targets as well, with the loss of two Ju 88s.
On the evening of 11th April, 6 Blenheims were despatched to bomb the Prilep-Monastir road. All of them were hit by anti-aircraft fire after hitting lorries, tanks and a nearby train. One plane did not return. The Luftwaffe was active in strafing British ground troops in the area of Kozani and at Servia. However, casualties were low due to the mountain terrain. On the night of the 11th to 12th, the Greek hospital ship Attiki was sunk by German raiders though it very evidently bore the Red Cross insignia. Actually all six Greek hospital ships were sunk by the Luftwaffe. R.A.F Blenheims and Hurricanes attacked the Veles-Monastir road and shot down enemy planes. The Greek naval base was bombed and mined on the night of the 11th to 12th and the merchant ship Retriever was sunk outside Piraeus. (22)

On 13th April, German aircraft attacked Volos harbour devastating it and sinking ships. A raid of 20 Ju 88s met 7 Hurricanes. One Ju 88 was shot down. Blenheims bombed vehicles and ground troops in Florina without enemy resistance. Later, 6 British planes set off to raid Prilep again without fighter cover, but they were met by 3 Me Bf 109s and all six were lost. Nine more Blenheims were sent to raid the same target, escorted by fighters; no losses were reported that time. Sofia was also bombed by Wellingtons on the 13th to 14th April, with one loss due to ground fire. But of course, the most serious event was the raid of the Luftwaffe on Larissa, Kalabaka, Niamata and Paramythia airfields. The Greek observation system had failed completely and the Allied planes were parked close to each other, badly camouflaged and with limited anti-aircraft protection.

The enemy twice attacked Larissa airfield destroying at least 14 Hurricanes on the ground. The attacks on the other airfields raised the number of Allied losses on the ground to 22, including 4 Hurricanes, 2 Blenheims, 2 Greek Potez 63s and 13 of unidentified type (Greek Blochs and P.Z.L.s, Lysanders, Avro Tutors, Potez 63, Yugoslav Dornier 17s and captured Italian planes). Additionally, 16 Blenheims at
Niamata and almost all remaining Greek planes had been destroyed. In one day the Luftwaffe had cost the Allies (including the few Yugoslav machines that had got away) up to 44 planes. (23) See Maps 10, 11, 17, 18, 19

The German air force continued to bomb the harbour installations of Greece and to airlift German soldiers, for example, using 3 Ju 52s to move infantry to the Kozani plain. The Allied air force had to abandon all its forward airfields and restrict itself to those few in the south. That increased the possibility of similar enemy attacks on airfields. Rumours were spread that the Germans had not crack forces only on the ground, but also in the air. According to these rumours, Goering had established a special air unit which had been sent to Greece and the spinners of the German planes were painted yellow. This was given added force by the appearance of planes whose spinners were indeed yellow. (24)

7b) Treason Within?

The rapid and almost unchallenged German advance in Greece brought with it chaos, panic, disorder and, above all, defeatism. The inability of the British to stop the German attack, the lack of coordination between the two Allies, the collapse of the E.M.A. and C.M.A and the fall of Salonika and almost a third of Greek territory to the enemy, signified the impending end. The Greeks had placed their hopes above all on the fighting power of the B.E.F. These hopes were brutally shattered when the British could do nothing more than fight rearguard actions. No major offensive to the north could be undertaken by the small forces of the Allies against the large German aggressor. It was a battle between the mighty Goliath and the weak David, without his sling. These British and Greek defects were to have a deep influence on the local population and the army and to cause disorder.
During the first days of the fighting, many rumours, possibly circulated by German agents provocateurs, made the Athenians believe that Turkey had aligned herself with the Allies. Unfortunately, as Buckley says, the flat rejection of these rumours by the Turkish embassy in Athens forced all the Greek and Turkish flags which had been hoisted in the city, to be lowered down. What was even more detrimental to Greek morale was the rumour on 17th April, that the Allied line had been broken, the Olympus position breached and that the Germans were in Larissa. On receipt of the later news, armed police began to patrol in the Athenian streets, because the Greek Government feared fifth-column activities and a pro-German coup d' état by unspecified pro-German Greeks. (25)

Not only did the news of an impending collapse of the rest of the front demoralise Athens, but the provocative continuous presence of the German legation in Athens aggravated the whole situation. The German Minister and the Military Attaché Clemm Hohenberg wandered around the city in full uniform, free to spread wild and unfounded rumours to break even further the Greek morale. That showed how remiss and half-hearted were the measures of the Greek Government to guard the German diplomatic staff. Since Greece was at war with Germany, she should have exchanged the German diplomatic personnel for the Greek mission in Germany, as had been done with the Italians. However, this did not happen.

Palairret had repeatedly asked the Greek Government to force the German Minister to leave the country. The Greeks thought of sending him to Turkey but seemed to have a problem with his safe departure and that is why they prolonged his stay. The Greeks had found a ship to take him to Turkey, but they could not guarantee his safe journey under a sky dominated by the enemy air force. According to Palairret, the German Minister refused to go. (26) Possibly
because he was sure enough that the German troops would soon roll in.

Other sources indicate the fact that the Greek Government, pressed by the British, decided it would take the German Minister to Crete when it left Athens, to deliver him to the British. At that point, members of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs led by the pro-German Alexis Kyrou, threatened the government that they would resign if it forced the German Minister to go to Crete. They argued that such a forced departure was contrary to international law. Perhaps they forgot that the Germans had already interned the Greek diplomatic staff, contrary to international law.

The Greeks had failed completely to curtail the German personnel in Athens leaving them with a free hand. They should, if unable to repatriate them for the moment, have at least confined them to their legation. By contrast, the Greek diplomats in Berlin were rounded up and, against every rule of international etiquette as Weizsacker says, interned at Wittenberg. Apparently the Greeks could not (or would not) imitate the German authorities. They must have feared reprisals by the Germans; and indeed the German Minister was among those who welcomed the German troops to Athens.

But the final blow to the Greek morale and cause came on 16th April when the treacherous and defeatist Deputy Minister of War, Papademas, issued an order (along with the Easter pay) sending the reservist officers who had just been called up on leave for two months. He also gave 15 days leave to men from enemy occupied areas. Finally he gave the generals on the spot discretion to decide whether to continue fighting or not.

This was of course a clear indication that the Greek Government did not wish to continue the war any further. However, it was not the truth. Papademas had acted on his own, without the approval of Koryzis, Papagos or the King.
Additional defeatism and depression came from the Minister of Communications, who ordered that to save any further unnecessary loss of life, all remaining Greek planes should be grounded and the Tatoi and Elefsis oil dumps be destroyed. However this order was countermanded, at the last minute, by the King. Papademas went further proposing to the King that Greece should make a separate peace with Germany. The opinion of Emmanuel Tsouderos, next Premier of Greece, and of Palairet was that Papademas had to be shot. (29)

Mr. Elias Kartalamakis verified that the remnants of the Greek airforce in Greece, with few exceptions, had been destroyed on the ground by the Greeks. The Greeks, according to Kartalamakis, ordered the destruction of the remaining Greek planes so that no one would be able to accuse Greek airmen of abandoning their country and reaching Egypt, while the Greek army continued to fight. In the event, some planes were destroyed, some were not, and some flew to Egypt. Kartalamakis informed me that this action did not derive exclusively from a spirit of defeatism; rather, it was aimed at the protection of the air force's prestige. Mr. Evangelos Karydis also verified that orders were given for the destruction of the Greek planes on the ground, but he did not give a reason for that. (30)

It was on 16th April that Papagos, at a meeting with Wilson, proposed the evacuation of the B.E.F. in order to save Greece from further devastation. He proposed that, though the Imperial forces would retire to Thermopylae line, every measure should be taken to ensure the speedy evacuation of the B.E.F. The British agreed to that, provided that such a request came from the Greek Government. The British thought that Papagos spoke for himself, without having the official support of his government. Even today, it is not absolutely certain whether Papagos was expressing only his own ideas, or whether he had consulted the King and/or Koryzis on that issue. British records show that Papagos had
proposed to Wilson the evacuation of the B.E.F. Greek records show that Wilson proposed it to Papagos.

Churchill, too, regarded the Papagos proposal as inconclusive and insisted on an official communication. However, even before an official Greek note, Wavell had undertaken to make plans for the evacuation of the B.E.F., to abstain from sending any more troops and equipment to Greece and to gather all available shipping. Koryzis went one step further. He considered the British as guests of Greece and told Palairet that he was therefore ready to "prejudice" Greek troops to benefit the British. Probably Koryzis meant that he was ready to sacrifice Greek troops to give the British time to leave. In Palairet's view, the timely appeal of Papagos to evacuate the British saved Wilson (and Britain as a whole) asking for it, thus throwing the whole responsibility of the decision for the evacuation on Papagos and on Greece generally. (31) But before looking at the British evacuation, one must consider the drama of the victorious Greek retreating army from Albania.

7c) The End of an Epic

The rapid development of the war in the Balkan peninsula, the disintegration of the Yugoslav army in the south, the capture of Salonika, the capitulation of the E.M.A. and the deep German thrust into Central and Southern Greece decided the fate of the Greek army in Albania. The German advance in mainland Greece, apart from the danger it posed for the Imperial forces, placed the Greek army in Albania in a very perilous situation. If the Germans could place themselves at the rear of the Western Macedonia Army and the Epirus Army and advance to Janina, then those Greek armies would be cut off from the rest of the country.

A retreat to the south was the only possible solution but a very costly one. After a six months victorious campaign against the Italians, the Greek army would have to retreat to
its homeland while its defeated enemy walked into all the hard-won Albanian territories. The final line of the E.A. and W.M.A. would have to be on the Greco-Albanian frontier up to Merdjan or on the line of the River Kalamas-Elea-Mount Smolikas or from the River Aoos via Mount Orliakas to the River Venetikos and its confluence with the Aliakmon.

The decision to withdraw the Greek forces from Albania had been under consideration by the Greek General Staff since January 1941 but the approval of such an order entailed many risks. Such a retirement would have to be made mainly on foot, since motor transport was almost completely lacking and because most of the pack animals were exhausted or had died during the winter campaign. A Greek army of around 300,000 men would have had to walk. Also, the withdrawal of the Greek army did not exclude the possibility of a German attack on it or its being cut off. Nor did it mean that the Italians would not be encouraged to stage a new offensive in the light of a general Greek retreat.

Needless to say, any air protection for the execution of such a huge plan would be minimal while the anti-aircraft defence was non-existent. Similarly the road and railway network was so heavily congested, destroyed and damaged that it could not sustain a quick withdrawal. On the contrary, it would delay the Greek retreat. Most of all, no one could assure Papagos that his Greek divisions, by now battle-weary and ill-equipped, would get back to Greece in one piece. It was possible that the Greek armies would crack and dissolve, as happened with some units of the C.M.A. The task of bringing back to Greece 139 infantry battalions, 48 cavalry squadrons, 22 independent machine-gun companies etc, organised in 14 infantry divisions and 1 cavalry division, was not an easy task.

The troops to be withdrawn would have to be supplied constantly in order to fight off the Italians, who would have been encouraged by the German attack and the subsequent retreat of the Greek army in Albania and would surely make
an attack now that the Greeks were on the run. Possibly the Germans would mount an attack as well. If one bears in mind that a whole Army Corps, the II, would have had to be supplied, supported and withdrawn over a single bridge at Merdjan what could happen if that bridge was blown up by the superior German and/or Italian air force? (32)

Since 8th April the W.M.A. had repeatedly asked the General Staff to decide on the future of the operations in Albania in view of the Yugoslav catastrophe. After the fall of Monastir to the enemy on 9th April, the Greek Headquarters decided to order the evacuation of Albania, and Western Macedonia. On 11th the General Staff asked both the E.A. and the W.M.A. to consider - under the unfavourable conditions which had been created by the German advance - whether they could remain in their positions or was it imperative to withdraw. Both corps answered in favour of remaining where they stood, since they considered that a deep withdrawal would be detrimental for the morale of the troops. E.A replied that it could resist Italian attacks as long as the W.M.A was supplied regularly. However, the next morning, when the corps were asked by the General Staff again about their course of action, the corps's Chiefs of Staff replied that they could withdraw provided the Italians did not seriously harass their pulling back.

Therefore, Athens ordered the withdrawal of the W.M.A. and the E.A. The former would retire in the direction Koritsa-Kastoria-Grevena. The E.A would retire on the general line Koritsa-Erzeka and at some point would join up with the W.M.A to make a coherent line. The Epirus Army comprised the I and II Army Corps under Lieutenant-General Panagiotis Demestichas and Major-General George Bakos respectively.

The I Army Corps consisted of the II, III and VIII Infantry Divisions. All of them were worn out and of limited capacity, but their morale was fairly good. The II Army Corps had the I, IV, VI, XI, XV, XVII and V (Cretan) Infantry Divisions whose fighting abilities were reduced and which were not at
full strength. The whole Epirus Army was commanded by Lieutenant-General John Pitsikas. The Western Macedonia Army had one Corps, the III, comprising the IX, X, XIII, XVI Infantry Divisions, the XXI Infantry Brigade and the Cavalry Division. It was led by Lieutenant-General George Tsolakoglou and most of its units with the exception of the XXI Infantry Brigade, were better equipped and more battle-worthy than those of the E.A. The Cavalry Division was relatively well equipped and its morale was good.

However, if the spirit of the men of the Greek units might have been fairly good, the morale of their commanders was not. As early as the end of February 1941, the previous commanders of the E.A and of the two corps had been summoned to Athens to discuss the military situation. Their view was that the Greek army must withdraw, as soon as Germany attacked and that Greece must seek peace with Germany. They were instantly replaced by new commanders. When this incident occurred, the King and Papagos decided to stiffen Greek morale and ordered an offensive to take Tepelene. The attack was launched on 7th March but had to be postponed, due to the Italian spring offensive on the 9th. (33)

On 1st April Demestichas proposed to Pitsikas that if the Germans struck at the rear of the Greek forces, then it would be better for the Greek army to capitulate than to be destroyed or forced to flee. Bakos too, during the campaign, believed that a withdrawal to the south would ultimately result in the disintegration and desertion of most Greek units. Pitsikas criticized both for these suggestions, forbidding them to say anything further of that kind and he informed Athens that after the German successes the morale of the hitherto victorious Greek army was deeply affected and he pleaded with the government to find a honourable solution for the army. (34)

Even Tsolakoglou when asked by Papagos about the prospect of success of the withdrawal, replied that 'the last
opportunity for a retreat of our so far victorious army has passed. Its role has been reduced to a mere spectator of the enemy advancing to the south."(35) With that reply the W.M.A. attempted to force Papagos to proceed with the withdrawal as soon as possible and as quickly as possible, but it is also evident the first signs of defeatism and lack of fighting spirit. The order for the general evacuation was given on 12th April. Too late, according to some people. Koritsa was abandoned on the 9th. The W.M.A had to withdraw an equivalent of 20-25 km per day until it met up with other Greek forces. The XIII, IX and X Divisions were to retire across the valley of the Aliakmon, while the XVI Division was to defend the Kifafe-Karit pass and to cover the withdrawal of the E.A. from the Koritsa-Leskovic area against enemy attacks. See Maps 10,11,13,17,18,19

The E.A. ordered its I Division to take up position at Leskovic and to fight rearguard actions in case of a German attack. The withdrawal of the W.M.A was largely unmolested by the enemy until 15th April. Interference by the enemy air force and ground troops was minimal. However, on that day, elements of the SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler supported by tanks and other vehicles, clashed with elements of the XIII Division. Greek artillery smashed around 25 tanks and other vehicles and held the enemy. At 1100 the Germans attempted a second, more dangerous attack in the Ambelokipi area, near Argos Orestikon with ten heavy artillery batteries. The Greek artillery checked that enemy attack as well.

A third German attack at 1330 with artillery and tanks forced every Greek man to run to the right of the position. Four heavy and three field artillery batteries shelled the Greek positions. However, an understrength and ill-equipped Greek battalion stopped the third enemy attack. At 1700 the Germans attacked for the fourth time with tanks, planes, artillery and infantry. Greek-speaking German soldiers tried to persuade the Greeks to surrender but without success. 40
German planes bombed the Greek batteries from a height of 50-100 metres and managed to destroy some of them and two anti-aircraft guns.(36)

Finally the remaining Greek soldiers were unable to stop the Germans, and totally surrounded, decided to surrender. A few of them managed to escape captivity by moving west of the Aliakmon. The Germans claimed that by 18th April, they had taken 20,000 prisoners and many guns. However, the epilogue to the story of these Greek forces at Argos Orestikon was played out only in May 1941. When General Sepp Dietrich, the commander of the SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler decided to review the battle, he visited the German Headquarters in Athens and, in the presence of a Greek officer who had taken part demanded to know what his forces had been up against. See Map 10,11,16,18,19

He was told that the XIII Greek Infantry Division had been holding that sector and that two infantry battalions, one machine-gun battalion, two heavy gun sections, one reconnaissance unit and 4 heavy, 3 field and 2 mountain artillery batteries fought at Argos. When he heard that, he grew angry because he could not believe that these few Greek formations checked and delayed his elite SS regiment. He thought that he had faced at least three infantry divisions. When Dietrich was supplied with the evidence he congratulated the Greeks on their successful defence.(37) So ended the first and last major battle between the Greek army in Albania and the Germans.

Similar German attacks were made around Lake Kastoria, with tanks and infantry supported by around 35 planes. Initially their attempts failed in the face of artillery fire from the Greek Cavalry Division, but later on they pushed on and managed to break through, taking Kastoria and forcing the mounted Greeks to flee.

Up to now the W.M.A had managed to disengage itself from Albania without any serious problem from the Germans and the hesitant Italians. Athens decided that because the
Northern Pindus mountains lay in the way of the Greek retreat, the XVI Division should be placed under the command of the E.A. and with the I Division make up the Morova Divisional Group. On the evening of 15th April the Germans were in Kalabaka and the escape route of the W.M.A. had been cut off. The XIII and the Cavalry Division were on the run, depleted, lost and in disorder, the right flank of the W.M.A. was in peril since the C.M.A. had ceased to exist and it faced certain flank attacks by the Germans.

The dejected remaining men and formations of the C.M.A mingled with the coherent and battle-worthy units of W.M.A spreading confusion, despair, panic and disorder. Also every telephone and radio contact with the units of W.M.A had been temporarily lost and the withdrawing formations could not be informed of any changes to their line of retreat or updated on the course of action. The E.A. started its retreat under the worst conditions. Its morale was in bad shape, shaken by the German successes. Its final line was to be from the River Venetikos-Orliakas-Vasilitsa-Smolikas-Merdjan-Greco-Albanian frontier with its left on Lake Voutroton. The I Army Corps had the good fortune that it could retire more easily than the II Corps, using the two major roads of Argyrokastron-Cacavia and Khimara-Konispol and also with its left protected by the mountains and the sea, excluding the remote possibility of an Italian invasion.

On the other hand, the II Corps, being east of the River Aoos was on mountainous and inaccessible terrain which ended in the single bridge, the Merdjan. The roads from Klisura and Kiafe-Karit also ended at Merdjan, so not only the II Corps but also the Morova Divisional Group had to pass through that bottleneck. The Merdjan bridge was the only exit for a large part of the Greek army in Albania, including motorized transport. The withdrawal of such large forces therefore needed delicate and accurate planning, to avoid confusion, dispersion and delays, important factors for the morale of the retiring forces.
If one bears in mind that this attempt would have to be made with the Italians in the north hard on the heels of that army, the Germans on the right and the combined enemy air forces overhead, it became an unattainable task. The II Corps began its withdrawal first, since it had a more difficult route, followed by the I Corps on 16th April. (39) The morale of the troops was low. The V Division from Crete was a very good unit at the start of the winter campaign, but it had been positioned on the very high mountains of Trembesina and Sendeli continuously since February 1941, and had been constantly exposed to bad weather which had led to a decline in its morale. The men were not able to prepare a hot meal for many days due to the terrible weather. In combination with the ceaseless artillery and air bombardment, this had broken its spirit.

When its withdrawal started on 13th April, over rocky ground, it ended in its almost complete disintegration, which even the divisional commander was not able to stop. Insubordination, disobedience, lack of fighting spirit, and desertion reached the point that on 15th April Bakos reported to Pitsikas that the V Division had ceased to exist. (40)

The IV Division started its withdrawal on the night of 13th April with the Italians following closely. Desertion was so great that the officers had to man the artillery themselves. The XVII, responsible for hill 731 was attacked by the Italians twice, supported by artillery and mortar fire on the 14th but the attack failed with terrible losses for the enemy. The Italians launched local attacks on hill 802 with artillery and mortars but failed here too. Hill 731, one of those so bloodily fought over during the Italian spring offensive in March still held on. The VI Division was also attacked sporadically by artillery and infantry fire but its retreat was not endangered by the Italians. The XV Division suffered large desertions, especially by soldiers who came from occupied Florina. Therefore the officers decided to execute
two deserters to make an example; after which desertion from that division somewhat declined. (41)

The I Division was affected by desertions as well, especially its 5th Regiment which lost up to 50-60 per cent and had to introduce summary executions. The Italians did not obstruct its movement. The XI Division was compelled to divide its forces into smaller units. That allowed faster movement, especially in a territory where the roads were few, in bad condition and already congested. A further dispersion of its units occurred, when some of its battalions were sent to reinforce Wilson Force south of Grevena and others to Katara. Thus by 15th April the division was dispersed over an area 150 km wide without any possibility of regrouping. Thereafter, it ceased to exist as a division.

The I Army Corps was also attacked by Italian units attempting a breakthrough. The II Division faced an artillery bombardment and then an infantry attack which was repulsed east of the River Drinos. The heroic VIII Division which had first faced the Italian attack so magnificently in October 1940, had been under constant strain and it was expected to break up. At Mali Spat it faced similar local Italian small scale infantry attacks on 14th and 15th April supported by artillery fire and air power but repulsed them at great loss to the enemy. The III Division was also attacked by the Italians following intense artillery fire, but they were largely contained in the area of Khimara, except for a small success in Bolena. (42)

On 15th April Major-General Bakos reported to Pitsikas and to Athens that desertion and disobedience in the E.A was so great that the dissolution of the army was imminent and suggested that only an armistice with the Germans would save it. The King telegraphed to Epirus that Greece's interests demanded the rejection of any such thought. He reminded the Epirus Army that British soldiers were continuing to fight on Greek soil and that Greece could not afford an
armistice which would be immensely more disastrous than anything else. (43)

Papagos, too, had addressed Pitsikas, telling him that the Greek army should continue fighting to the last man. British troops were still in Greece and it would amount to betrayal for the Greeks to surrender and thus leave the British troops unsupported and uncovered. Papagos saw the obligation of the Greek army and nation more towards Britain than to Greece itself. He recognized the urgency of a political solution but not one which would imperil the Allies and disgrace Greece in History. On the other hand the Deputy Minister of War Papademas held the opinion that once the Greek Government had left Athens (for Crete probably), the commanders on the spot could initiate talks with the enemy.

Papagos continued to plead that the E.A fight for a few more days, until the Greek Government had left and it was possible to start the armistice procedures. What he desired was that the Greek army would hold on long enough for the British to evacuate Greece safely, so that Greece could not be accused of treachery and dishonesty. (44) The field commanders had a different view. The Greek army could not continue to fight, even for the few days that Papagos wanted. The danger of complete disintegration was very real. According to them, the only possible solution was a capitulation to the Germans which would save the honour of Greece by keeping Italian troops off Greek soil.

As the Greek army's retreat continued the Italians followed on behind. Until now the Italian army had shown a relative reluctance to press any strong attack. That was partly because they were afraid of clashing with the Greek forces again and partly because the Greek rearguard had been quite successful in keeping them contained. However, if the Italians realised the real extent of the Greek army's withdrawal and dissolution, it was possible that they would press their advance harder or even mount a new offensive. Such a thing would result not only in the Greek army being
totally destroyed but, worst of all, in pursuing Italian troops entering Greece again. The enemy, so far defeated, would appear as the victor.

After that, if the Greek army decided to surrender, it would have had to surrender not only to the Germans but also to the Italians, since they would have crossed into Greek territory as well. Time was against the Greeks. A timely capitulation to the Germans now, while the Italian army was still in Albania and the Greek one was still victorious over them, would surely save the honour of Greek arms and keep intact its victory over the Italians. If on the other hand the Italians were allowed to enter Greek territory, History would give the Italians unwarranted credit for a victory, simply because they were on Greek soil. (45)

Papagos agreed in principle with the generals’ view, but he still needed the extra time, for the British troops and the Greek Government to evacuate the mainland of Greece. Papagos and the Greek Government had in mind something else as well. They could see that the Italo-Greek war was not a limited, local war that would end with the capture of Greece. It was part of a world war, where allied interest had to be taken under serious consideration since it was closely tied with the Greek. Therefore, according to the Greek Government and its more fervent supporter, Papagos, Greece could not undertake any action that, on the one hand would enable her to cease the fighting, but on the other hand would risk her alliance with Britain; a country which has not simply assisted Greece with military material, but which has send her own troops to fight and die in Greece. There was a moral obligation of Greece - as there was for Britain in the past - to assist the B.E.F to leave the country. After the war, if the Allies won, Greece would, if she covered the British evacuation, probably gain full support for the satisfaction of her territorial claims such as the Dodecanese, Northern Epirus, Eastern Thrace and even Cyprus. (46)
But if Greece betrayed Britain by an early capitulation, none of Greece’s national interests would be considered. Therefore the government and Papagos preferred “the dissolution of the victorious Greek army, its destruction and capture [by Germans and Italians], even its humiliation, to allowing a capitulation to the Germans” as long as a single British soldier fought on Greek soil.(47)

7d) To The Last Line

The withdrawal to the Thermopylae line had commenced and the Wilson Force, consisting of the 2nd New Zealand Infantry Division, the 6th Australian Infantry Division and the 1st British Armoured Brigade (from the 2nd British Armoured Division) were retiring once again. However, the gap between that force and the withdrawing Greek army grew so much wider that there was not any possibility that their two fronts could be linked to carry out a joint withdrawal, let alone a common rearguard action. The connections had been broken by the dissolution of the intermediate link, the C.M.A., but above all by the mistrust between the Greek and British forces.

General Papagos, according to Buckley, exercised only a rather loose control over the Imperial forces and hesitated to express his point of view with the vigour he would have done when addressing his own troops. Wilson did not always bother to inform the Greek Headquarters of his decisions and moves and the Greek General Staff was often ignorant of the position of Wilson’s divisions. It had to ask the liaison officer, Heywood, who in his turn replied that he did not have the faintest idea of Wilson’s plan.(48) Such was the “brilliant” cooperation among the Allies, against an enemy who possessed everything. See Maps 10,11,12,18,19

The British withdrawal was to be carried as follows: the 6th Australian Division would retire under the cover of the 2nd New Zealand Division along the River Pinios and occupy
positions between Zarkos and Larissa. The 2nd New Zealand Division would retire across the Brallos pass to the east of the Thermopylae line. The 1st Armoured Brigade would cover the withdrawal from the direction of Grevena and Kalabaka and then retire to the Aliakmon area as a reserve. The Savage Force would retire along with the 6th Australian to Brallos. The 6th Australian started its retreat with the 16th Australian Brigade destroying some of the vehicles and equipment that could not be taken away.

The Germans soon followed it and attacked the position of Evangelismos. The Australians had to prevent the German 2nd Armoured and 6th Mountain Division from moving through Tempe to the Larissa plain, to gain time to allow the last of the Imperial divisions to pull back. The Australian position was broken at 1830 on 18th April resulting in the destruction of the Australians. Larissa fell to the enemy, but they had been delayed. The British Armoured Brigade had to cover a distance of around 50 km to Kalabaka. The 2nd New Zealand retired under fog and enemy artillery pressure. Most of its men had not slept for days and had to march 16 km on foot, with German planes and tanks on their heels.

In Elasson elements of the 6th New Zealand Brigade met German tanks and after a brief but intense encounter in which the Allies, after firing numerous shells, destroyed some German tanks, they continued to withdraw. The withdrawing Allied column was around 110 km long and it was only the cloudy weather that prevented the Luftwaffe from taking a heavy toll of the British marching troops. But on 18th April, the weather improved and soon the German planes swooped on them. More than 50 planes bombed and strafed British vehicles and men at least six times. However, the mountain terrain acted as a shield again and protected the men. The R.A.F made no great appearance. It could make only two sorties of not more than a hour each, in a zone of only 15 miles. This was hardly enough for the protection of
troops but it lifted Allied morale somewhat when two British planes shot down a German. (50) See Map 17

On 20th April most of the Wilson Force had withdrawn to the Thermopyllae line. However its strength was seriously depleted by the losses sustained. The 3rd Royal Tank Regiment had only one cruiser tank left. The 4th Hussars had 13 tanks left, while their anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns had to be destroyed and ditched. The troops were tired and under-equipped for the task of holding a line of 50 km which could be outflanked from both east and west. The Germans could land on the island of Euboea (as they did) and then return to mainland Greece further south, by-passing Thermopyllae, or they could use the mountain roads west of Brallos, or the roads leading from Epirus along the Gulf of Corinth to Gravia. The B.E.F was not in a condition to face such a challenge with the depleted forces available. (51)

The only fighting on 20th April took place when German motor-cyclists coming from Domokos were shelled by British tanks and Australian forces. The ability of the B.E.F. to fight at Thermopyllae after a withdrawal of about 200 km during which it lost most of its armour and equipment, was doubtful. The proper defence of the Thermopyllae position, which was wider than when Leonidas faced Xerxes, needed at least two fully equipped divisions, one on the Brallos pass and one on the Thermopyllae pass, besides which the mountain roads had to be guarded to prevent the Germans outflanking the position with their two mountain divisions. Still more troops would have to be found to guard the road from Delphi, since Thermopyllae could be turned, if the Greek army in Epirus capitulated.

The German forces had moved swiftly to crush Allied opposition. List's army had three army corps in Greece. Additional units could be called from Field Marshal von Weich's 14 divisions in Yugoslavia of which three were armoured (8th, 11th, 14th), or indeed from the Bulgarian
army. Most important, by now, the enemy had established an indisputable air supremacy.

The last of the R.A.F. was to be seen on 20th April. A force of 100 German dive-bombers and fighters attacked Athens. The lack of R.A.F. planes was so serious by then that the few remaining British fighters which managed to take off served no other purpose than to raise the morale of the Athenian population. That day the last 15 serviceable Hurricanes flew to intercept the incoming enemy. In the last dog-fight in the Athenian sky, the British shot down 22 enemy planes, with another 8 probables, but for the loss of 5 Hurricanes. A small victory had been won, but at a Pyrrhic cost. The remaining British planes withdrew to the most southerly mainland airfield at Argos where they were destroyed on the ground with very few escaping to Crete.(52)

Ten days earlier the Greek 32nd Bomber Squadron was to suffer the same fate on the bases of Elefsis and Tanagra following a Me Bf109 attack. It was evident that the withdrawal of the B.E.F. would have to be carried out under totally hostile skies.

7e) The Swan Song of Greece

As the Greeks retreated in Albania, the Italian army followed close behind but without causing a serious hindrance to the withdrawal. It was obvious that the Italian aim was not to inflict any damage to the damaged army, but to test to what extent the Greek army was still efficient and ready for battle. The Italians were still afraid of resuming the attack.

As Cervi says:

"the exhilaration of the Italian advance was only superficial; it concealed sadness at this belated success scored over a defeated enemy. Only the generals, beginning with Cavallero, took pride in manoeuvres that did not impress the ranks."
Even a child could see that they consisted of keeping up with a retreating enemy."(53)

When hill 731 was finally occupied, the Italians found the five lines of trenches to which the Greeks fell back successively, during the Italian spring attack; and which they had repeatedly recaptured. On 14th April the Venezia Division entered Koritsa and the VIII Italian Corps marched into the Desnizza valley. The 11th Army entered Argyrokastron on the 18th.

On that day a meeting took place at Tatol Palace, the Royal residence between the King, Papagos, Koryzis, Palairet, D'Albiac and Turle. The aim was to decide whether the British should leave or not. Papagos as before gave a desperate account of the military situation in Albania and Epirus and pointed to the enemy's power in the air and on the ground. He believed that even if the British managed to hold Thermopylae, it would not be long before they were pushed back once more. The Greek forces in retreat were facing continuous attacks from the air and on the ground, without a single British plane in their support. Similarly the supply ability of the Greek infrastructure was very limited now that the Greeks had had to abandon the harbour of Santi Quaranta. Additionally, the devastating destruction of Piraeus did not help with the supply of the Greek forces. Communications and transport to the retreating Greeks were near to complete breakdown, the Merdjan bridge had been destroyed and although repaired twice, it was doubtful whether the whole II Army Corps would manage to cross it before it was destroyed again. Finally, Papagos referred to receiving alarming reports about the morale of the Greek army. The British said that they could hold on in Thermopylae until about 6th May provided that the Greek army continued to fight and the Greek Government wished for further resistance.(54)
At 1400 there was a meeting of Ministers at which there was a disagreement. Papademas favoured an immediate withdrawal of the British troops. Most of the other Ministers were in favour of a continued resistance at Thermopylae. Koryzis was unable to take resolute decision and seemed to waver. Papademas, in order to influence him and the rest of the Ministers, read a cable sent by Major-General Bakos earlier:

"I have repeatedly stated and state again that the situation is rapidly deteriorating. Disorder, disobedience, abandoning of posts and officers, are spreading in spite of all the measures taken, even executions. In the name of God I appeal to you to take an immediate decision so as not to have to cry over ruins. Whoever believes that he can carry the cross of that martyrdom better than myself, let him reflect, let him come here and weep at this catastrophe because our tears have dried." (55)

Lieutenant-General Pitsikas had also sent a frantic appeal to Athens stating that "the situation has reached a deadlock. Parts of the XVII Division have deserted. The I Army Corps has reported similar desertions of men of the VIII Division. The XI, covering Metsovo, has disintegrated. In the name of God, save our army from the Italians". (56) While such distressing appeals were received in the capital during the Minister's meeting, Lieutenant-General Demestichas and Major-General Bakos informed the Premier and Papademas that since their appeals had been repeatedly ignored, they were going to act independently and approach the Germans with a view to capitulating to them, thus saving the honour of Greece by avoiding to surrender to the Italians. With this the senior officers of the Epirus Army agreed. (57)

The Greek Government was only allowed a few hours to make up its mind, before the generals would act on their own. Koryzis telephoned Pitsikas and assured him that he would try to find a solution before the day was out. Before
leaving the meeting he proposed that the government should be taken over by someone else, who was more capable than him of dealing with the situation. He probably meant army officers. He then kissed the King's hand, went home and killed himself. In reporting this to London, Palairet explained that Koryzis had acted this way because he thought he had failed the King.(58)

The King decided himself to take over the government provisionally, perhaps because he was afraid of the pro-German elements in Athens. His confidence was based entirely on the British troops and their capacity to maintain order in Athens. Palairet added to his previous report to London that the suicide of Koryzis was not due to the deteriorating military situation or to his inability to change it but because he was in ill health and under considerable strain.(59) This is a very poor and naive explanation. Koryzis was indeed affected by the deteriorating situation in Epirus, the pro-German elements in Athens and the fear of treason within his cabinet. Koryzis knew that not only were officers at the front, and leading personalities in Athens who were pro-German, but even some members of his cabinet shared those sympathies. It seemed probable that, with the German advance deep into central Greece, such figures might join forces to overthrow the government and establish a pro-German regime.

On the evening of 18th April, Wavell suggested to Wilson that the British should not hurry their evacuation unless it was imperative for political reasons, i.e. if the Greek Government did not wish any further resistance. Wavell told Wilson that if the British could establish themselves at Thermopylae and could hold the enemy there, they should do exactly that. According to him every minute in Greece improved the defence of Egypt and Crete and made for a better organisation of the evacuation. The role of the British army, according to Churchill, was to assist at a maximum and as long as possible the heroic Greek army and nation.(60)
Churchill also demanded a clear endorsement from the Greek Government before proceeding with the evacuation but, since this had not come, he welcomed any resistance which bled the German army.

The Greek Government was not able to give any official declaration yet, simply because the King was alone, the Premier dead, the army ready to dissolve and capitulate and the enemy within striking distance of Athens, but above all because no one would assume the responsibility for ordering the evacuation.

The King hoped that the Greek army would continue fighting until the British had been evacuated. If the Greek army capitulated before the official Greek decision to do so, the British would be trapped in Greece, since the capitulation of the Greek army would enable the Germans to free forces to pursue the British forces before they could be embarked. That would constitute a betrayal by Greece. Already substantial rumours concerning the fighting qualities of the Greek army withdrawal were circulating among the British. The British were accusing the Greeks of deliberate strategic omissions and flaws which had almost destroyed the B.E.F. An immediate Greek surrender would certainly confirm those rumours and originate many more. That had to be avoided at all costs.(61)

The next day Wavell arrived in Athens for consultations. First of all he had a meeting with Wilson to weigh up the question of resistance or evacuation. The arguments in favour of resistance were that a resistance would inflict damage on the enemy and tie down large ground and air forces which would otherwise be employed in North Africa. Any withdrawal would result in losses of men, material and, most of all, vital shipping. Even if the majority of the force were to get away, which the British thought it would not, it could not be redeployed immediately, but would have first to be regrouped, reorganised and re-equipped. Also, the navy would suffer losses to ships since no air cover was available.
The arguments in favour of the evacuation were that Thermopylae could not be held with the existing forces and reinforcing them was not possible. The population of Athens and its surrounding area would have to be fed by the British, when they did not have enough for themselves. Enemy air activity was so great that, even if the British could be reinforced with some planes, this could not happen immediately and the Allies had so few remaining airfields that they could not add much to the battle. Finally the defence of Egypt and Cyrenaica was at stake if the British decided to draw more forces from there to benefit Greece. Wilson told Wavell that the Greek army could not be trusted or relied upon anymore, the Greek Government had lost control of it, the present leadership was weak in its support of the British and a new Greek Commander-in-Chief was needed to restore the lost morale. Wavell agreed. They thought that only 30% of the initial force would get away.

As Cruickshank points out very clearly, the whole meeting was academic, since Wavell's decision to postpone the despatch of the 7th Australian Infantry Division and the Polish Independent Brigade, and to stop every ship bringing or even unloading supplies to Greece, made it impossible for the two men to vote in favour of resistance even if they wanted to. Cruickshank fails to see the reason for such a meeting. (62)

Later on, Wavell and Wilson attended a meeting with the Greeks. Among the Greeks was Lieutenant-General Alexander Mazarakis, whom the King had asked to become Premier. Wavell said that the British army would go on fighting until the Greek Government decided that it was time for them to leave. The British said that they could successfully resist until 6th of May 1941. But any successful resistance by the British at Thermopylae depended on the ability of the Greeks to hold on in Epirus. Papagos then informed the British that the Greek army in Epirus was without ammunition, food or supplies of any kind. Papagos said that the morale of that
army was very low and that if the British decided to continue fighting, Greece would be devastated completely. He also pointed out the problem of feeding Southern Greece, arising from the increasing number of refugees arriving from northern territories. He finally suggested, as before, a speedy British evacuation.

Mazarakis said that he had been called too late to make a difference, and the best thing would be that the British evacuated Greece. The King was not sure whether to authorize the evacuation of the British troops. So the matter remained unresolved. Papagos thanked the British for their help, though he pointed out that it was very inadequate to meet the danger. Wavell in his despatch to London said that with these "mercurial people decision is not certain. Papagos is beaten man. King is full of fight but there seems no outstanding person to whom he can turn either political or civil."(63)

Though Wavell and Wilson had decided in their own meeting to evacuate the B.E.F., they had not informed the Greeks of this. They deliberately left the subject to the Greeks, as if this was not a British issue. Thus the Greeks were left with the belief that the British were willing to continue fighting if the Greeks were in favour of resistance. On 17th April before the death of Koryzis, Rear-Admiral H.T. Baillie-Grohman had been sent to Athens, on Wavell's initiative, to plan the evacuation. Baillie-Grohman and Anthony Heckstall-Smith say in their book Greek Tragedy '41 that the Middle East Headquarters was totally unaware of the impending evacuation until 13th April, and thus unprepared.

However, Major-General Francis De Guingand in his book Operation Victory writes that the Joint Planning Staff had started to plan the evacuation of the British forces in Greece even before they had been transported there. However, the planning was, he says, kept absolutely secret; the claim of Baillie-Grohman and Heckstall-Smith that no preparations had taken place, perhaps implies, that the naval authorities
were not aware of them until it was too late for them to carry out their own planning. (64)

19th April was a bad day for Athens. No final decision had been reached for or against a withdrawal, something which intensified the crisis in the Epirus Army. Though Pitsikas had been assured by Koryzis that during 18th April the question of capitulation would be resolved, it was not. Men in the Greek army were deserting and pro-German elements in the police and the armed forces were increasingly prominent. It was a constant fear of the King and Palaireset that they might seize power. A report from Eastern Macedonia was received that an officer had ordered his men not to fight the Germans. The Greek army in Albania was refusing to obey orders and there were many incidents of insubordination. Greek morale was very low. (65)

Also, a mutiny had taken place in the navy. Crews in a number of ships refused to sail for Egypt. The main reasons for the mutinies were defeatism, Germanophilia, fear, the success of the enemy propaganda, spiritual fatigue, and the desire of the officers and the men not to leave their families behind. Most of the mutineers were family-men and did not want to abandon their families to the conquerors. What had also aggravated the situation, was the sight of members of Royal Court, the cabinet and the Premier's family leaving the country by warships and carrying with them their clothes, personal belongings, paintings, furniture, whole households, etc. while the crew members were not even allowed to farewell their beloved ones.

The indignation of the crews was such that in some cases they did not allow the above mentioned passengers to board the ships. Three submarine commanders, for example, decided not to take their ships to Alexandria. Similarly, crew-members of the destroyer Aetos mutinied against departure for Egypt and the same happened on the Averof. At the last minute, the dissenters were either arrested or relieved and the ships sailed to freedom. (66) However, the
above examples show the magnitude of chaos and confusion that existed in the armed forces, partially spread by Germanophiles.

Meanwhile the Greek army continued its dramatic retreat followed closely by the uncombative but persistent Italians. On 17th April the W.M.A. was abolished and its units were incorporated in the E.A. as III Army Corps. The E.A., now with three corps, was withdrawing on the lines Drinos-Klisura-Merdjan, Erseka-Merdjan and Metsovon-Janina. Troops continued to abandon their posts and the danger of complete destruction of the rest of the Greek forces was forever present. The abolition of the W.M.A and the incorporation of its units into the E.A proved to be a mistake, because it brought the rebellious Lieutenant-General Tsolakoglou closer to Pitsikas and his units. From then onwards, Tsolakoglou was able to influence directly the E.A and its commander, which was ultimately to lead to its surrender.

Pitsikas informed his corps commanders that they had to fight until 21st April. After that day, and if the situation continued to remain unstable and the E.A. was unable to offer any further resistance, the commanders on the spot could start their own negotiations with the Germans. That was what Papagos and the government had decided, as he had been told on the phone by one of Papagos' assistants working in the General Staff. Bakos had been pressing Demestichas to coordinate their activities and either include Pitsikas in an approach to the Germans or, if Pitsikas disagreed, to remove him from his command and contact the Germans. It seems that Pitsikas never agreed to a plan of surrendering to the Germans without governmental authorization. But Bakos, in order to influence Demestichas and to persuade him to start negotiations with the enemy, told him that Pitsikas was in agreement with the plan too. Demestichas decided to go to Janina to see Pitsikas and verify the latter's intentions on the spot. While this was
going on, the Chief of Staff of the III Army Corps Colonel Athanasios Chrysochoou had been sent to Athens by his superior, Lieutenant-General Tsolakoglou in order to discuss the situation with Papagos and the Premier.(67)

Chrysochoou reached Athens on 18th April where he heard that Koryzis had committed suicide and that the King was in favour of resistance until the British departure. Papagos was uncooperative, but some General Headquarters officers told him that Papagos was against any capitulation for the reasons already stated. On the other hand, it seems that these same officers informed Chrysochoou that Papagos had said that "let the generals do it on their own", implying a capitulation. It seems also that this phrase had been telephoned to Pitsikas as well, but not with Papagos' knowledge. After a considerable delay, Chrysochoou saw Papagos and told him the commanders' opinion. Papagos replied that he was unable to authorize capitulation since British troops were fighting on Greek soil. Chrysochoou did not investigate whether Papagos had actually said, "let the generals do it on their own".(68)

Then Chrysochoou sent two messages to Tsolakoglou. In the first, on 18th April, he informed Tsolakoglou that the Premier had committed suicide, that the King and the government would soon leave Athens and confusion was widespread, and that Papagos was at the moment, unable to authorize any capitulation. Chrysochoou proposed that the commanders should proceed to a capitulation on their own initiative. On 19th April Chrysochoou sent a second message which seemed to seal the fate of the E.A. It read: "Initiative rests with the Army. If you assume responsibility, you should seek consent of the rest of the Army Corps, before contacting the Germans. Garrison Office "Θ (Theta)". (69) (The Garrison Office "Θ (Theta)" was code for General Headquarters.) The message from Chrysochoou to Tsolakoglou must have been intentionally misleading. In a subsequent
report, Papagos claimed that he had not seen, let alone approved, of the two messages at all.(70)

Mr. Leonidas Papagos, son of the General, and a friend of his, Ages Kapsabelis, were working during the war for the ciphering service of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Kapsabelis claims that Lieutenant-Colonel Athanasios Korozis, who also worked in the General Headquarters, ordered him, to send the two telegrams to Tsolakoglou in each case in the presence of Chrysochoou, with the justification that he had to inform his superior of the situation in Athens. Korozis added that Kapsabelis should say nothing of this to Papagos or anyone else and that he would himself tell Papagos. However, after sending the two telegrams from the General Headquarters, Kapsabelis informed Leonidas Papagos of the incident, and the latter told his father. The Greek Commander-in-Chief was not aware of the two telegrams, so Korozis had not informed him about them, as the latter told Kapsabelis he would do. Papagos therefore summoned Korozis immediately, presumably to question him about his actions.(71)

However, Papagos wrote in his report that Kapsabelis himself informed him of those actions right after the capitulation. Papagos, in his report, does not state that he summoned Korozis to question him about his actions, simply because he had not found out about the unauthorized capitulation until 21st April. By that time the capitulation had taken place, but above all, Papagos did not want to give the British any pretext to accuse Greece of betrayal and to allow more mistrust to develop between the Allies.(72)

When Tsolakoglou received the two messages, he told Pitsikas that he had been authorized by the General Headquarters to send emissaries to the Germans. Pitsikas believed him. Tsolakoglou knew, however, that the last telegram authorizing to capitulate was not sent by Papagos but by Tsolakoglou’s Chief of Staff, Chrysochoou. In the meantime, Pitsikas was sent a message by the General
Headquarters that two emissaries of the King would soon arrive in Janina to see all the commanders. Pitsikas informed the three corps commanders and ordered them to be in Janina to meet the emissaries. Tsolakoglou promised to be there and not to proceed with any individual action prior to emissaries' arrival. But Tsolakoglou had deceived Pitsikas a second time. While the King's emissaries were on their way to Epirus, he had despatched his to the Germans.

While all this was happening in Epirus, presumably without the knowledge of Athens, the political and military situation was changing rapidly in the Greek capital. On the evening of 20th April the Naval Chief of Staff, Rear-Admiral Sakellariou, was sworn in as Vice-President (Deputy to the King); since Lieutenent-General Mazarakis, among many others, had declined the King's offer of the job. Immediately he and the King despatched fresh messages to the E.A. In Sakellariou's text, he pleaded with Pitsikas to fight on, reminding him of the many disadvantages of a capitulation including the prospect of the Allies accusing Greece of abandoning them before they had had time to stabilise their position. On the other hand, he pointed out that one of the benefits of resistance was that after the final victory of the Allies, "Greece will be rewarded for her sacrifices by the complete satisfaction of her national rights." (73) Without spelling it out, Sakellariou was suggesting that Greece would be rewarded by the Allies for her continuous participation in the war, with the satisfaction of her territorial claims as seen above.

Papagos also sent another despatch to Pitsikas in which he authorized him to use any means, however severe, to restore order and discipline among the troops. According to Papagos, although he and the King were fully aware of the situation in Epirus, the honour of Greece was not to be disgraced. Of course, by the time these messages were received in Janina, Tsolakoglou's men had encountered elements of the SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler. Pitsikas informed the General
Headquarters at 1230 on 20th April, that Tsolakoglou had not arrived in Janina to meet the King's emissaries as promised, but had sent his emissaries to the Germans.

Meanwhile Churchill in a personal minute to Eden, told him that in his views, if the British commanders on the spot decided they could offer significant resistance at Thermopylae, then they should. Every day that the German air force operated in Greece enabled the British to stabilise their position in Libya and possibly reinforce it with tanks. Churchill did not want to see the British quit so quickly. That was the essence of the telegram that Palairet received the next day from Foreign Office. "Nothing should be done to make impossible a resolute decision to stand at Thermopylae if military authorities on the spot consider such a course practicable."(74) Were the British using Greece in order to stall the Axis campaign in North Africa irrespective of the devastation caused on their small Ally by their prolonged resistance?. I think the answer is yes for the reasons stated just above.

On 21st April, a the final meeting took place between the British and the Greeks with the newly appointed Greek Premier Emmanuel Tsouderos among those present. Palairet in his telegram to the Foreign Office said that Tsouderos "inspired Wavell and Wilson with great confidence that he can be trusted to deal with the situation with strength and prudence."(75). In that meeting, in the absence of Papagos, Wavell asked the King whether the Greek army could hold the front to the left of the Wilson Force at Thermopylae. It seemed that the British wanted to continue the battle. The King expressed doubts; Wavell said, that, in that case, it was better that the British left Greece. The King assured Wavell that the Greek army would do its best to continue to guard the left flank of the British position and avoid giving way to the Germans from the west. Palairet's despatch to London argued that after six months of hard winter campaign only Metaxas would have been strong enough to lead the country
against the second, more powerful enemy. It was only on the evening of 21st April, after a considerable delay, that Papagos sent a message to Pitsikas to replace Tsolakoglou immediately and to continue fighting. It was too late.(76)

The first armistice in Janina on 20th April with General Dietrich was not enough. On 21st April the Germans forced Tsolakoglou to sign a second and more official document in the presence of the Chief of Staff of the 12th Army, Major-General H. von Greiffenberg. The second document was a capitulation and quite different from the document of the day before. Tsolakoglou protested about the breach of that first agreement but in vain. He protested that he was signing the second document under duress as a prisoner of the Germans but he signed it anyway. That second document disgraced the Greek army. One of its terms was that all Greek soldiers be considered as prisoners of war, in contrast with the first armistice. This caused massive desertions to escape captivity. Another condition of the armistice on which the Greeks had relied was that German troops were to be interposed between Greeks and Italians, so as to end the hostilities, whereas in certain cases the Germans allowed the Italians to pursue the Greeks and attack them.

However, this was not the end of Tsolakoglou's humiliation. When Mussolini found out about the one-sided armistice he became furious. He ordered Cavallero to continue his attack on the Greeks until they asked the Italian authorities for a capitulation as well. Mussolini also intervened with Hitler with the result that Tsolakoglou had to surrender to the Italians as well. Halder writes in his diary on 21st April:

"...the Fuhrer thought that he might manage to confront Mussolini with the accomplished fact. That fell through. Mussolini telephoned to the Fuhrer and demanded Italy's participation. The Fuhrer ordered that the capitulation concluded by Twelfth Army should not become effective pending his approval. This was to give the Italians an opening for appearing as partners in conclusion of the
capitulation. Such a political manoeuvre makes the German field marshal and commander of Twelfth Army look foolish in the eyes of the Greek army, and furthermore lays the foundation for a systematic falsification of history, designed to create the fiction that it was the Italians who forced the Greeks to capitulate. "Incidentally, it is reported the Fuhrer informed Field Marshal List that he would have acted the same in List's place. Such appeasements do List no good, as long as he remains publicly disavowed."(77)

Tsolakoglou was forced to sign a third document with the Italians as well, on 23rd April in Salonika in the presence of Lieutenant-General Alfred Jodl, Deputy Chief of Staff of Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (O.K.W.) and General Ferrero. The terms of that document were even worse than those of the other two and included the clause that the Italian troops would not only be allowed to enter Greek territory but any Greek troops found within the Italian zone of occupation were to be considered their prisoners. That clause created a panic without precedent as many Greek soldiers hurried to the German sector to escape from the Italian captivity. The reason for this, which is foreshadowed already in the process of capitulation, is that originally the Germans had no intention to occupy Greece, leaving that to the Italians.

Tsolakoglou had thus created himself the very situation he had been afraid of. In some cases, however, German troops did not allow the Italians to proceed deep into Greek territory; for instance the 73rd German Infantry Division assisted the Greeks to move south into the German sector. On the same day, the Greek General Staff was dissolved. Papagos offered the Greek Government his resignation which was immediately accepted. In the British Foreign Office the dissolution of the General Staff, and the acceptance of Papagos' resignation, were interpreted as signs of mistrust by the Greek Government in the Commander-in-Chief. In his despatch to Wavell, Wilson said that these steps were
designed deliberately so no one in a high position would be able to make terms with the Germans.(78)

Tsolakoglou left for Athens and later on headed the first 'Quisling' Government. In 1945, after the liberation, Tsolakoglou was sentenced to death, but his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Mussolini sent a message to congratulate Cavallero on his "victory" over the Greeks. "In this hour of victory, I must acknowledge your indisputable merit in having in the course of four months created the conditions necessary and sufficient for attaining it. These conditions consisted in breaking all further enemy counteroffensive efforts, as you have done.....". (79) Hitler referring to the Greek campaign in August 1942, said "what lucky people! [the Italians]. When they are beaten, three days later they have forgotten it. When they win a victory, they remember it for all eternity." (80)

But the worst humiliation for the Italians came from the French. As Mackenzie writes: "It was said in Berlin that the French had put up a sign-board on their frontier between France and Italy." It read: "Notice to the Greeks. French territory begins here". (81)

7f) Sweet Farewell

The final and irrevocable decision of the King and the Premier to spare their country further devastation meant one thing only: the speedy evacuation of the B.E.F. from Greece in order to end the hostilities with the Axis. Such an operation was not an easy task however. The evacuation of the whole of the B.E.F. to Egypt was considered almost impossible by the British. It was estimated that only 20-30 per cent of the men would get back and the majority of the equipment would be lost. The journey to Egypt was 600 miles in all. An intermediate staging post was Crete, 160 miles away. Either journey would be made under condition of German air supremacy, so heavy shipping losses were to be expected.
Moreover, the destruction of Piraeus and minelaying there, along with the capture of some harbours and the bombing of others, meant that the British could not use any of the large ports of Greece and would have had to limit themselves to distant beaches and ports, often difficult of access and of low capacity. The loading of the troops would have to take place under the eyes of the *Luftwaffe*. The air defence capacity of the ships, ports and beaches was very limited, even non-existent. It was preferable therefore that loading should take place mostly at night which would provide substantial protection against the air danger, but delay the loading. It also meant that the sea passage would have to be made during daylight. Wavell preferred that most of the men should be taken from beaches in the Peloponnese rather than in Attica so as to diminish the range of the German air force.

All the ships had to be away from the beaches by 0300 so as to be out of range of the enemy bombers by daylight. However a danger lay in the fact that the Peloponnese was linked with the rest of mainland Greece by a single bridge over the Corinth Canal. If that was lost, there was no other way for the troops to reach the beaches except by time-consuming ferry crossings. Wilson decided to start the operation, codenamed, "Demon", on 28th April, on the assumption he would have the assistance of the Epirus Army. After its unexpected collapse, he brought the start date forward to 24th April. Seven beaches were selected, five in the Peloponnese and two in Attica. It was estimated that 9,000 men would leave during the first night, 5,500 during the second and 26,000 during the third. As the reader can see the programme was not evenly balanced, since the bulk of the troops would have had to leave on the last night.

It was expected that the enemy air force would make sailings more difficult during the subsequent days. It was difficult for the Allies to calculate precisely the number of men to be evacuated, since that number constantly changed as stragglers, civilians, refugees were added up. In addition
one should add the rearguard units, which until then would have been holding the Germans, to allow time for the rest of the force to get away, as well as those units who could not be evacuated the previous nights owing to some mishap.

The British decided to take most of the men to Crete, which was closer than Alexandria, so as to limit the time the ships spent at sea. Most of the soldiers would carry only their personal weapons and nothing else. Most of the larger guns and heavy equipment would be destroyed or ditched. No vehicles would be taken. An additional danger was posed by the Greek capitulation in Epirus which enabled the Germans to by-pass the west of Thermopylae, capturing the Corinth Canal and crossing into the Peloponnese. (83)

The Greek General Staff prior to its dissolution had ordered that a Greek reinforced battalion would take up position in the Patras-Rio area to crush any possible enemy landing. Buckley disagrees about the significance of a German outflanking of the Thermopylae made possible by the Greek capitulation. Buckley says of the surrender of Tsolakoglou:

"It should be noted that the surrender of Tsolakoglou did not affect the strategic position of his Ally. General Wilson's force was already completely out of contact with all the main Greek formations when the surrender occurred and had made good its retreat to the Thermopylae line, so its position was in no way immediately worsened by the surrender in Epirus. Had the British aimed at fighting a rearguard action all the way down to the southernmost point of the Peloponnese [Peloponnese] irrespective of losses, then the enemy forces released by Tsolakoglou's surrender might have been employed with great effect. But the British decision to evacuate Greece had already been taken, and the chosen points of embarkation were comparatively close at hand." (64)

Anyway, further assistance by the Greeks to the retreating British was very unlikely. The lack of contact and
cooperation between the Allies was illustrated by the following example from Stanley Casson:

"Our General in command of the mission at Athens decided to go direct to Jannina [Janina] to see exactly what the situation was. He had taken the precaution of having a message sent to the Greek staff there, and the reply had come in German - 'Hier is das deutsches (sic) Heer' - or words to that effect. There is nothing like asking the enemy precisely where he is. That has always struck me as the most direct form of intelligence; the Germans had been most obliging."(85)

The effect of the Luftwaffe was such that 23 ships had been sunk in just two days, on 21st and 22nd April. An Australian correspondent gives his own picture of the intensity of air attack:

"For two days I have been bombed, machine-gunned and shot at by all and sundry. German stukas have blown two cars from under me and have strafed a third..... All day and all night there have been waves of Germans in the sky. Eighteen Messerschmitts strafed us on the road last evening. Bullets ripped two trucks, and one was destroyed but nobody was hurt and nothing lost except the truck. Before that, the convoy was attacked seven times in two hours but not once was the convoy disorganised or broken. The Germans are using a fantastic amount of aircraft: more than I ever saw in Norway under similar conditions of terrain. Goering must have a third of his airforce operating here, and it is bombing every nook and cranny, hamlet, village and town in its path...."(86)

The almost complete lack of Allied aircraft made the disparity of the forces even worse. For the last phase of the campaign, List ordered the 2nd Armoured Division, the 6th Mountain Division and a regiment of the 72nd Infantry Division to attack west of the Brallos heights towards Gravia, while the main force would make a drive along the coastal road. Elements of the 2nd Armoured Division would attack
the left flank of the Anzacs from the west. On the evening of 24th April, List ordered Stumme, now commanding both the XVIII Mountain and XL Army Corps, to take Corinth and move on Athens. Meanwhile an airborne attack was to be made on the Corinth Canal. At the same time, motorized elements of the 2nd Armoured Division, having crossed over to the island of Euboea were to return to mainland Greece, on the coast of Boeotia and move towards Athens.

Thebes was taken by the 5th Armoured Division on 25th April. Meanwhile, the SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler advanced to Agrinion. One element continued in the direction of Pyrgos along the west coast of the Peloponnese, while another occupied the Gulf of Patras. The German pursuit to the Thermopylae position was not as rapid as the British had expected. This was, first, because the demolitions had delayed the German motorized forces; second, because the rocky terrain had constantly hampered rapid mobility anyway, except for the two trained mountain German divisions; and third, due to the successful local rearguard actions of the British. See Maps 10,11,12,18,19

On 22nd April, a German column of the 5th Armoured Division attacked the 6th New Zealand Brigade at Thermopylae but was halted by Allied artillery. An attempt to turn the position by elements of the 6th Mountain Division also failed, due to artillery fire. During the morning hours of 24th April, a German armoured attempt to pierce through the 6th New Zealand failed. At least 15 German tanks were destroyed. Then the Germans attempted to copy Xerxes' plan to capture Leonidas from the rear. At least 14 German tanks with strong infantry support managed to climb up the western slopes of Thermopylae and to attack the defenders.

The Allies had enough artillery to repel the German attack but not enough ammunition and inadequate means of communication. This provided the Germans with the opportunity to advance close to the Allied position. The 6th New Zealand Brigade had to withdraw, leaving behind field
guns and equipment. The Germans captured Molos on the 25th and with it 30 guns. (88) The New Zealanders were retreating through Athens to the beaches, a journey of at least 250 km. It was a moment to remember according to Comeau:

"For the Greeks this war was the final test. They knew that we were leaving them to the Germans. They had every excuse for throwing a few bricks. Instead, they called their sad adieux, as each truck drew level as if to say: Thank you for coming to our aid. We know you have done your best. I cannot imagine this happening in any other capital of the world". (89)

Mackenzie has an extract from a gunner's letter:

"But not a trace of bitterness against us, though it was obvious we were leaving...... Even now they [Greeks] are helping us: ten miles up the road behind us I met a dozen Greeks this morning with two machine-guns, I resolved to fight it out. In spite of all their mistakes and strategic follies, I take my hat off to the Greeks". (90)

The 19th Australian Brigade on the left at Thermopylae was also attacked by at least 65 bombers and then by German infantry. Enemy attacks supported by mortars forced the brigade to fall back. Meanwhile, the evacuation had commenced. On the first night 5,500 men, the majority of the New Zealand division were taken off. At Nauplion, though the ship Ulster Prince ran aground, the remaining five ships lifted 5,500 men for Crete. Another Dunkirk - but a much more difficult one since the sky was dominated only by enemy planes and the trip to safety was longer than from France to Britain - had started. (91)

On 24th April the Greek ship Hellas was bombed in Piraeus and sunk. Lieutenant-General Blamey and Major-General Mackay left Greece on 25th April. Freyberg, though ordered
to leave, decided to stay, since his troops were still in Greece. That day the Germans took Thermopylae by a pincer movement, but it had been evacuated. It was proved that Thermopylae could have held out much longer, as the British had rightly suggested, provided adequate forces had existed. On the night of the 25th 4,700 men were taken off the Megara beaches. In order for the ships to be away by 0300, 500 men were left behind. The numbers evacuated were more or less accounting to plan.

The Luftwaffe turned its attention to the Corinth Canal. The Corinth Canal and the Isthmus of Corinth were guarded mainly by a company of New Zealand infantry and a squadron of New Zealand cavalry. On 26th April, the Germans mounted an airborne attack on them. It was a harbinger of what was to take place in Crete in little less than a month. Two battalions and an attached heavy weapons company of the 2nd Parachute Rifle Regiment carried out this audacious operation, no more than 800 men. Before the opening of the attack, around thirty dive-bombers escorted by around 100 fighters strafed and destroyed the 11 anti-aircraft gun emplacements. Then came the Junkers 52s with the paratroopers. They flew low, three at a time, around 200 feet, since there were not any Allied planes or guns to fire at them. See Maps 10,11,12,18,19

The battle was tough. Though the bridge over the canal had been prepared for demolition by the British, the parachutists managed to capture it intact until two British soldiers fired at the charges and blew it up, with many Germans on it.(92) Though during the night the Germans occupied both ends of the destroyed bridge, their success was not followed by a rapid movement into the Peloponnese, as the British expected. The German parachutists had suffered 63 killed and 158 wounded but had captured around 1000 Imperial troops and 1450 Greeks. The only Allied force now north of Corinth was the 4th New Zealand Brigade, which so far had escaped German attention. On the evening of 26th April they
opened fire when a column of around 100 vehicles approached them. This gave away their cover. Even though the Germans withdrew, the New Zealanders knew that they had been spotted. With the fall of Corinth making withdrawal there impossible, they had to be evacuated from Porto Rafti in Attica.

Operation Demon was proceeding. 4,340 men were taken off from Nauplion and Tolo but around 1,700 had to stay behind. The ships were delayed and the bombers found them on their way. The merchant ship Slamat was bombed and sunk. Two destroyers were sent to pick up survivors and met with the same fate. At Kalamata, at least 15,000 men were waiting for embarkation.

However, once the vessels arrived on the night of the 26th/27th, one cruiser and four destroyers, they could not carry more than 8,000 men, the majority of the two Australian brigades (the 16th and 17th). At Porto Rafti the 4th New Zealand Brigade, having being bombed and strafed by twenty fighters and attacked by German tanks, was loaded onto ships and escaped to Crete. In Monemvasia most of the 4,000 men of the 6th New Zealand Brigade were taken off on four ships which, though delayed, escaped unharmed. (93)

At Kalamata the number of the men rose from the 7,000 left on the 27th to 10,000 as stragglers, and civilians, Cypriots, Greeks, Jews and Yugoslavs poured in. 8,000 of them were unarmed. Two cruisers and nine destroyers came to take them away. But the vanguard of two companies of the German 5th Armoured Division, and two field artillery companies, attacked the Allies and captured the only British naval beach-master. A successful counter-attack drove back the Germans who lost at least 12 vehicles, 2 guns, two tanks and 150 men captured. However, owing to the loss of the single beach-master, contact with the ships was lost.

On top of the delay in the embarkation, an order came from the fleet in Alexandria that the ships had to sail right away
even if empty, because the Italian fleet had put to sea. The next day the Allied troops decided to surrender since they lacked ammunition and food. Yet it became known later that the Italian fleet had not put to sea at all. Thus all the men at Kalamata were captured. (94)

However, Heckstall-Smith and Rear-Admiral Baillie-Grohman have a totally different opinion of that event. They claim that there was no order from Alexandria that the ships had to sail for fear of the Italian fleet. These writers say that such an order existed only in the imagination of Captain Bowyer-Smyth of the Australian cruiser Perth who decided to leave the beaches prematurely and thus sealed the fate of the soldiers. Even if the Italian fleet had been at sea, which would have been surprising after its humiliating defeat at Matapan, the British ships could still have managed to engage it successfully. (95)

The War Office files show that the breakdown of communication caused by the capture of the only naval beach-master proved disastrous. It seems that the navy was neither properly informed of the German strength in Kalamata, nor told that a local successful Allied counter-attack had driven the enemy back. Rumours of mined quaysides frightened the naval commander who decided, perhaps prematurely, to withdraw his ships. (96) Further War Office files indicate that the failure to embark the majority of the New Zealanders in Kalamata was partly due to faulty dispositions on the part of the local ground commander failing to protect his force and the harbour from the enemy, and partly due to the ineffective communication between the ships and the New Zealanders. There is no mention whatsoever of fear of the Italian fleet, though the unfounded report concerning the mining of the harbour added to the confusion. (97)

Also, Freyberg says that no proper withdrawal plan had been made. The existing one was bad and the staff who made it inadequate. The whole force in the Peloponnese could have
been evacuated if the organisation had been better. Freyberg argues that his New Zealand Division and the 6th Australian could have held Thermopylae much longer, to allow time for a smoother and more steady withdrawal. Out of a force of around 60,000 men taken to Greece, about 50,000 were taken off, but the latter figure is the grand total of those evacuated. The British casualties were around to 12,000 dead, wounded and captured. 209 R.A.F. planes were lost and two destroyers and three transport ships sunk. Most of the equipment was lost including 8,000 vehicles. The British material losses in Greece amounted to seven field regiments, two medium regiments, three anti-tank regiments, at least 100 tanks and a lot more.

On 27th April, elements of the 2nd German Armoured Division achieved their final and most challenging target: Athens. Without any sound of fighting, not even a single rifle shot, nor the flight of a plane, a motor-cyclist battalion, the vanguard of the Brandenburg Regiment drove down to Athens and hoisted the swastika on the Sacred Rock of Acropolis. It was the 2nd Armoured that had taken Salonika and now they were first to take the capital. The German losses throughout the campaign had amounted around to 5,000 between dead, wounded, missing, captured and sick. At the end of the battle the Germans had in Greece three armoured divisions, two mountain divisions, three infantry divisions and the SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler.

The Italian losses throughout the Italo-Greek war were around 14,000 killed, 52,000 wounded and 25,000 missing, without counting prisoners of war, those hospitalised and the victims of frostbites. 65 Italian planes were shot down, and others destroyed on the ground; and 18 ships on convoy between Italy and Albania were sunk.

If the British had decided to hold the Thermopylae line longer than they did, List could have deployed against them, especially after the surrender of the Epirus Army, three armoured, two mountain and seven infantry divisions, one
motorized regiment and any of Field Marshal Weichs' 2nd
Army in Yugoslavia. It was indeed a most formidable
force against which the Anzacs had no fortune.

Churchill has said in 1948 about the Greek campaign that:

"They said I was wrong to go to Greece in 1940. But I didn't
do it simply to save the Greeks. Of course, honour and all
that came in. But I wanted to form a Balkan front. I wanted
Yugoslavia, and I hoped for Turkey. That, with Greece, would
have given us fifty divisions. A nut for the Germans to crack.
Our intervention in Greece caused the revolution which drove
out Prince 'Palsy' [Paul]; and delayed the German invasion of
Russia by six weeks. Vital weeks. So it was worth it. If you
back a winner it doesn't really matter much what your
reasons were at the time. They now say that I went to
Greece for the wrong reasons. How do they know? The point
is that it was worth it."(102)

It should be noted that while it is possible that the Balkan
campaign slowed down the German timetable, it may not
have delayed Operation Barbarossa, because the weather was
the determining factor which delayed it.

As Wilson and Blamey later said "the outstanding lesson of
the Greek campaign is that no reasons whatever should
outweigh military considerations, otherwise failure and
defeat are courted."(103) Blamey and Wilson may be right in
theory, but there are no cases in real life where one can
make a judgement based on military considerations only.
Unfortunately politics, diplomacy and strategy are mingled
together. For Wavell the Greek adventure, as summarised in
his despatch, which is included in Connell's book, "was ill-
starred from the first. ...Thus, while the whole expedition
was something in the nature of a gamble, the dice were
loaded against it from the first. It was not really such a
forlorn hope from the military point of view as it may seem
from its results."(104) In June 1945 Wavell said:
"From the military point of view the expedition to Greece was by no means the hopeless and quixotic affair that it has appeared in the light of what happened. Actually, the plan on which it was originally conceived had a very good chance of success. But certain actions taken, or rather not taken by the Greeks, after the plan had been agreed, the events in Yugoslavia, and our weakness in the air, led to our being turned out so speedily."(105)

Wavell's comment that the plan on which the Greek campaign was based had a very good chance of success, is mistaken. Even if the Greeks had taken the actions which Wavell accuses them of not taking (i.e. placing all their forces in the Aliakmon line from the outset), it is very probable that the whole Greek enterprise would have ended in the same way as it did. The German forces were so overwhelmingly superior to the Allies that the latter's fate was already sealed. A different outcome in this battle might have occured if Turkey and Yugoslavia had joined the Allies at an early stage and a common defence plan had been made. From the moment Turkey declared herself neutral, and Yugoslavia remained indecisive and thus non-committal, the Allies had no other alternative than to fight a battle with all the odds against them. Even if the Allies had placed all their forces only on the Aliakmon, one way or another German pressure on that position would have been so great that the Allies would have had to withdraw. It was merely a matter of days for the Germans. The Aliakmon position would have just held the German forces a bit more. It surely would not have given the Allies a victory, unless Britain aimed to transport more forces into Greece, while the first contingents held the Germans at the Aliakmon, along with the few Greek forces. But this was out of question because the British would not have prejudiced and endangered their position in North Africa, especially in the light of the Germans' arrival, just to save the Greeks and bleed the Germans.
For Dill, as he wrote in December 1941, the Greek entanglement had been a tactical defeat, but the strategic gains were immense and might prove to be decisive. By the British campaign in Greece, the Russian expedition had been delayed for five weeks. (106)

On that, Wilson and R. J. Collins agree. Wilson believes that, even though the percentage of German units detached for the Balkan operation was very small - only 7 divisions and 1 infantry regiment - in proportion to the 150 German divisions deployed for Operation Barbarossa, still, there was a series of events which upset the timetable. First of all, the British involvement in Greece, caused Yugoslavia to resist and fight, and forced Hitler to commit more forces in the Balkans. That caused a complete upset of the railway timetable for concentration and re-deployment. The difficulty of extricating the needed units for Operation Barbarossa, from countries such as Greece and Yugoslavia, where terrain excluded rapidity of movement, must have added to the change of the original date for the Russian invasion. In addition, the period of re-equipment between the two campaigns was so small, that must have had a detrimental effect on the tank formations on which the Germans counted for smashing Russian resistance. That does not mean that weather did not assist the Russians. (107)

Even so the British tactics had many good points. If one realises that the whole British battle in Greece was only rearguard actions, which were in all cases very successful, that the orderly retreat of 60,000 men on a single route back to the south over at least 300 miles took place under exclusively hostile sky and that the majority of those men were evacuated, then that British involvement was an amazing military deed.

As Butler suggests,

"it is often difficult also to disengage motives of honour from motives of policy. The decision in London appears to have
been made on much the same grounds as these, with the exception that the military arguments had to be taken at second hand—or indeed at third hand..... It is remarkable that 'no precise military appreciation', such as Mr. Churchill asked for, was ever received from Cairo; nor does account seem to have been taken in London of the drain on our resources in Egypt which a prolonged campaign in Greece would imply; in fact, no considered estimate was made of how much we were prepared to lose."(108)

For Papagos, the British intervention in Greece had been mostly a question of noblesse oblige. If Greece had been destroyed without the participation of British troops, after the unilateral guarantee of April 1939, it would have been another breach of promise. Such a mistake would have weighed against Britain's reputation in its fight against the Axis, in the rest of the world and most of all in the United States when they considered entry into the war. As Harold Raugh claims, American public opinion would have possibly discredited Britain and its cause, at a time when the Lend-Lease Agreement had still not passed through the Senate, where it was expected to face strong opposition. It would not have helped if Britain had abandoned Greece to its grim fate.(109)

Britain's lack of alternatives in Greece's case, is best characterised by the following telegram from Palaiiret to Eden on 21st April:

"You must be utterly disappointed at failure of our attempt to help Greece to resist German attack, but in spite of all I am sure that it is better to have tried and failed than never to have tried at all. After our guarantee and her gallant struggle could we have done otherwise?"[author's emphasis] (110)

The answer can only be one. No.
7g) Traitor or No Traitor

The question is simple. Was Tsolakoglou a traitor or not? That question is not so easy as the last one. We cannot judge so definitively Tsolakoglou's action in surrendering. He certainly mutinied and capitulated to the Germans without the authorization of Papagos or the government. He certainly double-crossed Papagos, and manipulated Pitsikas, Bakos and Demestichas to align themselves with him. His personal reasons were that he did not want to see the Italians on Greek soil, that he did not want to see the superior Greek army surrender to the defeated Italians. His reasons and intentions were very good and honourable, his actions very naive to say the least.

First of all, his unauthorized capitulation did not, as he desired, prevent the Italians from entering Greece. As shown above, the Germans in some cases allowed the Italians to advance into Greece in violation of the Greco-German armistice. Secondly, the Greeks, and he specifically, were forced to surrender three times to the Germans and once to the Italians, precisely what Tsolakoglou was trying to avoid at all costs by a separate German capitulation. In his own defence Tsolakoglou might have said that he did not expect that the Germans (on Mussolini's insistence) would force him to capitulate to the Italians. However short-sightedness and naivety is not an excuse.

He ought to have understood that one way or another, Italy would have demanded some kind of recognition for its participation in the war. Every reasonable man would have considered that Mussolini's bitterness would have found a way to be soothed. It was easy for Mussolini to call Hitler, as he did, and to insist on an Italian role in the capitulation. What was Hitler to do?. Was he likely to clash with his Ally, partner, co-belligerent and assistant in the war over such a petty issue as the Greek capitulation?. Of course not. Hitler preferred to order List, as he did, to make as many
capitulations as necessary to please Mussolini and end the dispute. For Hitler, this aspect of the Greek campaign was both irrelevant and unimportant to allow it worsen his relations with Italy, when he needed the cohesion of the Axis powers. Tsolakoglou should therefore have expected to be double-crossed by the Germans under Italian pressure.

As it turned out, not only was the Greek army forced to surrender to the Italians as well, but the Italians crossed the Greek frontier, pursued the Greek troops, imprisoned those in their sector and finally participated in the dual occupation of Greece. None of Tsolakoglou’s honourable aims and intentions was achieved. On the contrary, the dissolution of the Greek army continued and the desertion of troops intensified when the third capitulation was announced. What Tsolakoglou attempted to prevent by a timely surrender to the Germans turned out to be Greece’s worst nightmare. Purely from the military point of view, as Buckley says, there is nothing that Tsolakoglou could have done to save his army, because the SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler was in his rear and even if he now possessed all the transport needed to make a breakthrough, he would then have encountered that elite formation and the destruction of the Greek army would have been certain. (111)

Another critic of Tsolakoglou is Brigadier Savige who, in Long’s book, characterized Tsolakoglou as unhelpful, unwilling to fight and capable of double-crossing. Gavin Long himself characterizes Tsolakoglou as devious. (112)

On the other hand, Arthur Gould Lee gives credit to Tsolakoglou for his action. He argues that Tsolakoglou by his separate unauthorized capitulation delayed the SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler in Janina from attacking the British, thus allowing them more time to retreat. Otherwise the SS unit would have made a rapid southward advance to the west of Thermopylae and caught most of the British still on the beaches. (113) It is difficult to give credit to Tsolakoglou for that, simply because the delay of the SS in
Janina until 26th April was an indirect result of Tsolakoglou's capitulation and not a direct aim of his. He certainly did not have in mind to stall the SS formation by surrendering, just to give time to the British to leave.

Moreover, if we add to Tsolakoglou's dossier the facts that he established the first Greek Government under German occupation and that in March 1941 he had sent one of his aides to the German Consulate in Salonika to discuss unilateral peace terms with the Germans, it begins to appear that he actually surrendered to the Germans, mostly to satisfy his personal ambitions and because of his pro-German attitude, rather than to save the Greek army from destruction. Evidence which tends to support that charge against Tsolakoglou comes from Koliopoulos. He says that Tsolakoglou told a Greek diplomat in May 1941 that Germany would certainly win the war and that Greece should come to terms with her and even make some territorial concessions to Bulgaria, if necessary. Such views do not support that he capitulated just to secure the future of the victorious Greek army.

Geramanis makes another well-founded charge. He accuses Tsolakoglou of deserting his army, the W.M.A on 16th April and, on the unfounded pretext that his forces had completely dissolved, rushed to Janina with Karassos of the C.M.A. to start pressuring Pitsikas. The W.M.A. had not been destroyed by 16th April, so Tsolakoglou's trip to Janina was not supported by his claim. On the contrary, from 16th April onwards the forces of the W.M.A. were desperately looking for their commander, who had disappeared.

Geramanis says that the Epirus Army, though faced with pressure from a superior enemy to the north and on its right flank, was not so dangerously threatened as to justify such a hasty capitulation. Tsolakoglou's claim that the Greek army was on the brink of destruction does not hold true. The morale of both the I and II Army Corps was badly shaken and the desertion of men was great, but the E.A. could have
lasted for at least 5-6 days, against both the Italians and the Germans, allowing the British to leave Greece and the Greek Government to authorize the capitulation without betraying them. By 20th April, neither the Italians from the north-west nor the Germans from the east had been able to occupy the heights of Janina, or attack the natural defensive line on which the E.A. stood.

Thus, the nine full Greek divisions, with the remnants of the I and V, could have fought for a week in order to give the Greek Government time to settle its affairs and leave. Tsolakoglou’s armistice on 20th April was earlier than any disintegration of the E.A justified. The three Greek army corps, on the flank of the German army preparing to move on Thermopylae, were a substantial force which the Germans would have to deal with before their final attack on the Thermopylae line. (116)

The Germans would have had to crush the danger of the Greeks on their left. In actual fact, the SS formation wasted considerable time on just that mission. If the Germans felt that the danger of the three Greek corps to their left was such as to need annihilation before their attack on Thermopylae, Tsolakoglou must have been wrong to claim that the E.A. had to capitulate. Even if the E.A. was ready to collapse through lack of morale, supplies and cohesion, according to Tsolakoglou, the Germans must have been unaware of that or they would have attacked Thermopylae without attaching the importance which they did to their left flank, forcing them to delay their advance in Central Macedonia.

Additionally, the fact that the two telegrams which made Tsolakoglou send his emissaries to the Germans, were sent by his Chief of Staff, Colonel Chrysochoou, with the approval of Lieutenant-Colonel Korozis proves that some sort of conspiracy existed. It is known that many officers of the Greek General Staff did actually favour a quick and separate capitulation to the Germans. It is possible therefore that they
decided to assist Chrysochoou and Tsolakoglou to attain their goal, seeing the inability or the unwillingness of Papagos to proceed with a capitulation.

Geramanis attaches blame to Papagos as well. As we saw before in February 1941, Papagos and the King changed the command of the E.A. and its corps, when the previous commanders showed signs of defeatism. From 11th April onwards the new commanders were in favour of a political solution and an immediate capitulation, but Papagos did nothing at all. In February Papagos had sacked the previous generals within a day; now in face of even worse signs of defeatism Papagos stood idle. Why?. Similarly, while Papagos had throughout the April withdrawal argued for the importance of stubborn resistance in Albania, for the sake of Greece and her Allies, suddenly on 18th April he allegedly told his officers in the General Staff that the commanders on the spot should initiate negotiations with the enemy, since he could not.(117)

So we reach the point of utter confusion. Was Papagos willing to fight to the end in favour of Greece's Ally, or was he favouring an immediate capitulation?. If the second why an unauthorized one?. According to Geramanis, the famous expression, "let the generals do it", was telephoned to Pitsikas in front of many officers including Geramanis. Poor Pitsikas was so puzzled by this in the light of the written orders he had constantly received from Papagos until then for a stubborn defence, that he said to the officer using the telephone: "What is this you are telling me about an initiative?. Please issue [written] orders."(118)

Of course Pitsikas was bewildered when Papagos' oral orders were countermanded by his written ones and vice-versa. In the same way Geramanis cannot explain why it took Papagos from noon on 20th April, when he learnt from Pitsikas about Tsolakoglou's emissaries to the Germans, until noon on the 21st to issue orders for Tsolakoglou's "immediate" replacement. If Papagos disagreed with
Tsolakoglou's unauthorized initiative, should he not at that very moment have ordered Tsolakoglou's replacement?. Did he actually need 24 hours to order the "immediate" replacement of Tsolakoglou? (119)

In his report, Papagos claims that he found out about the capitulation only on the 21st, and he then immediately ordered the replacement of Tsolakoglou. But we know that on 20th April Pitsikas had informed the General Staff and therefore Papagos about Tsolakoglou's emissaries to the Germans. These two facts contradict each other. (120) Which of the two is true?. The full answer may never be known. Perhaps Papagos wanted to give Ume to Tsolakoglou to finish the negotiations simply because he secretly and personally approved of that. Papagos may have approved and welcomed Tsolakoglou's initiative, especially if we consider the phrase, "let the generals do it", but could not disagree with the King who insisted on fighting. In any event, Papagos' inaction on 20th April when he was informed about Tsolakoglou's action and his delay in ordering Tsolakoglou's replacement, is consistent with Papagos wanting Tsolakoglou to proceed with his plan. It is much more difficult to reconcile with the behaviour of a man who is resolutely in favour of fighting.

It is possible that Papagos wanted Greece to capitulate, but could not issue such an order, since he had to back up the King and the Premier and since an authorized capitulation would have been interpreted by the British as a treason. Tsolakoglou's intentions and actions came as a well-timed coincidence for Papagos, who could not openly accept it, but secretly, personally and indirectly could support it. It fulfilled Papagos' wishes while saving Greece and him from the everlasting public humiliation.

Two final supporters of Tsolakoglou are Mr. Elias Kartalamakis and retired Infantry Lieutenant Constantine Apostolou Christou. In an interview with the former on 21st November 1993 he told this author that Tsolakoglou had safeguarded the honour of Greek arms by keeping the
cohesion of the Greek army in Epirus and giving it an alternative to surrender to the Italians. (121)

Also Mr. Christou told the writer in two interviews with him, on 29th August 1994 and 5th September 1994 that Tsolakoglou's unauthorized and premature capitulation saved the Greek army from total disaster and capture. According to Mr. Christou, the Greek army was exhausted, demoralised and in full retreat. The Italians were in close contact with the Greeks near the Greco-Albanian borders. The unauthorized capitulation of Tsolakoglou allowed time for more Greek soldiers to enter Greece and place themselves in the German zone of occupation. If Tsolakoglou's capitulation had not taken place at that moment, and if the official capitulation had taken place later on, as the Greek Government, the King and Papagos wished, the Italians would have gained time to enter deeper into Greek territory and capture as many Greek soldiers as possible, whom they would then produce as evidence of their huge victory over the Greeks.

Tsolakoglou's capitulation, but much more the agreement that the German army would interpose itself between the Greeks and the Italians, served two purposes. First, it allowed time for more Greek soldiers to escape from the Italians and, secondly, by having the Germans block the way of the Italians, it enabled the Greeks to claim that they had not been defeated by the Italians, only by the Germans, since the Italian army had few Greek prisoners of war. Had there not been Tsolakoglou's capitulation, the Italian army would have chased the battered remnants of the Greek army, unable to offer any substantial resistance, and would ultimately have claimed many Greek prisoners of war as well as being deep onto Greek soil. Both these would have acted as Italian propaganda for their so-called victory over the Greeks. (122)
Conclusion

Greek participation in the Second World War is in itself an important aspect of Greek History which has gained the admiration and interest of many historians. It is the contribution, small or great, of what is certainly a small nation to a great war among Great Powers for their great interests. Greece became in 1940-1941 a piece on that world war chessboard but it was only one small piece. Greece was a traditionally pro-Allied country and that orientation was manifested a long time before the opening of World War II. However, at the time of the outbreak of that war, Greece was governed by an authoritarian dictatorship which had many similarities with the fascist regimes of Europe. These common political factors between Greece, and other European fascist regimes arose mainly from attitudes and preferences of the governmental leadership of Greece, and did not seriously reflect the opinion of the majority of the population itself.

What becomes more interesting and contradictory is the fact that the political leadership of Greece in the 1940s, though inclined towards Germany, did not hesitate to range their country alongside Britain and the Allies, knowing beforehand that their country’s peace and economic prosperity might well clash with their choice. However, the danger of war and destruction was not obvious then. Thus Greece, even before the Italian attack on her, became the obvious example of a country being politically pro-fascist but taking the Allied side. As the German Minister in Athens wrote in a report to the Wilhelmstrasse in November 1940: “Metaxas had no other choice than to reject the Italian ultimatum. If Metaxas had acted in any other way, it is doubtful if he would have been in power beyond the next six hours, or if he would have stayed alive. We lost in Greece a small, but not at all a bad, friend.”(1)

Thus the alignment of Greece with the Allies was the result of Metaxas’ decision to align Greece with the camp that had
in the past protected and assisted Greece and with the inclination of the population itself. Metaxas knew that Greece could surely not survive without Britain in war, because the British fleet dominated the seas and safeguarded the sea lanes and the convoys, on which Greece depended almost entirely.

From her occupation of Albania in April 1939, Italy had tried to provoke and aggravate Greece's population and leadership, in a vain attempt to force Greece to retaliate in an abrupt and hostile way, giving a pretext for an attack on her. Greece maintained a rather modest and apologetic attitude without offering any provocation. Throughout the period up to October 1940, when the Italian attack took place, the assistance of her Allies, primarily of Britain, was limited to solemn assurances of a political nature, relating to the independence of Greece for example, rather than to her territorial integrity. This guarantee was not effective at all in smoothing the Italo-Greek dispute or deterring the Italians. On the contrary, the fact that the implied British military aid deriving from the guarantee was not specified, and that its scope, extent, delivery date and, above all, nature, were not clarified, was something that intensified Greek anxiety without curtailing Italian hostility.

Until October 1940, the military considerations of Greece were preoccupied with the danger from its northern neighbour, Bulgaria. Very much at the last moment, and because Italy gave time to Greece to modify its strategic dispositions after the occupation of Albania, it was possible for the Greek General Staff to include the danger from the west in its planning. It is almost sure that if Italy had launched its attack sooner, especially if she had done so immediately after the Albanian interlude, Greece would have probably been lost. The Italian mistake in launching their attack more than a year after the Albanian occupation, allowed time for the Greek defences to switch direction and thus be prepared for the war.
Meanwhile the Allies, though seeing the Italian danger growing all the time more threatening for Greece, were totally preoccupied with the war in the west and Greece was given only peripheral attention. Britain was also afraid of provoking Italy and Mussolini and therefore preferred to turn down Metaxas' two pleas for military alliance. For the British, Mediterranean strategy depended more on the Italian factor than the Greek one. By contrast, the French approach to the security of the Balkans was less selfish. They were willing to reinforce the Balkan states militarily in a reenactment of the First World War strategy, so as to check German influence there and to use the Balkans militarily, if need be.

But the French initiative clashed with the British unaccommodating attitude that Greece, and specifically Salonika, was of little strategic value unless greatly supported and reinforced by the Allies, and mainly by the British. On those grounds, the British decided not to offer any assistance to the Greeks. Thus the French were forced to drop their proposals and the potential opportunity of a World War II Macedonian front was lost irrevocably. British strategists, in March 1940, did not overlook the geographical and geo-strategic importance of Crete. For them Crete had more significance than Greece. However one year later, they were bound to adopt the French plan when it was proposed by the Greeks, although they were in consequence involved in a difficult military enterprise in Greece. Surely if the British had listened to the wise French proposals a year earlier, they would have had the time to prepare a better plan against the Axis, and might, possibly, have united the Balkans in a common front. As it was the British decided to do all that at the very last moment, and not unnaturally they failed altogether.

When the Italian attack was launched against Greece, it was only the Greek spirit that managed to balance the numerical and material superiority of the Italians. The Greek soldiers
managed to cut short Mussolini's grandiose aspirations and humiliated him. Suddenly the British were stunned. They had expected Greece to fall like a ripe apple. Now they became open-minded. They saw the great opportunity that lay in front of them. The Greek resistance, welcomed by the Allies but as unexpected to them as to the Axis, tied down significant Italian forces which could otherwise have been employed in North Africa. The British Government, over many objections from its military advisers, decided to reinforce the Greek cause, initially by sending a small air force contingent. The British were not convinced that Greece could actually hold Italy for long and they did not want to commit many of their own troops.

During the arduous winter campaign, the Royal Air Force proved to be of vital but limited assistance. The desperate need of the Greek army for planes, tanks, transport, anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns was not met by the British. Thus the Greek army was left almost totally unsupported against an enemy who day by day grew stronger. The inability of the Greeks to move fast and to tackle enemy armour forced them to use mostly mountainous roads, which prolonged their marches, added to the weariness of the men and the pack animals, created a serious logistical problem added to by deficient communications between the front and the General Headquarters and as a result slowed the Greek advance to a complete standstill.

That failure of the Greek army to achieve fast and decisive mobility allowed the Italians to strengthen their forces considerably, fill their gaps in men and material, bring up new troops, and take cover behind a naturally strong line which in combination with the appalling weather conditions put a stop to the Greek miracle. During that winter of 1940 and spring of 1941, Germany's intention to clarify the situation in the Balkans moved to the fore. During that time the bilateral attempts of Greece and Germany to bring Italo-Greek hostilities to a close were partly undermined by
Britain which profited by Italian troops being tied down in Albania. There are some who believe that if Metaxas had not died so early, he would at some point have sought for peace with Italy through German mediation, whatever the Greek obligations towards the Allies, and he would thereby have saved Greece from occupation. (2) This is not however very plausible. Any Greek Premier, even Metaxas, would have had difficulty in making a separate agreement with the Germans to stop the Italo-Greek war. He would have had to think what the British responses would have been, and most of all the danger that aligning Greece with the Axis would have resulted in a frontal clash with Britain and with the Greek population.

The spring of 1941 became the focal point of the Anglo-Greek strategy in view of the German preparations for the attack on Greece. Churchill pursued the possibility, far distant as it was, that the Balkans could unite to form a coherent Allied front against Germany. Despite many well-founded reservations and hesitations from the British military men in North Africa, the British Cabinet decided to authorize the despatch of a British Expeditionary Force in Greece. The problems of an Allied Balkan front proved to be insoluble. The death of Metaxas created an irreplaceable gap. The rest of the Balkans, isolated, afraid, encircled by the Axis and quickly bribed or lured by proffered territorial concessions at the expense of Greece, hastily threw their lot with Germany. Anyway, the Balkan states were always fighting each other for small territorial gains, becoming satellites or even executioners of the Great Powers' manipulations and rivalries.

Unfortunately, the Anglo-Greek strategy was based on two mutually conflicting points. On the one hand the Greeks insisted on defending the whole of the Greek territory, even if that resulted in a subsequent total loss, while on the other hand the British, concentrated on the generally logical goal of saving most of the country while still maintaining some
chance of success. This divergence in opinion was the worst case. It produced mutual mistrust and lack of cooperation. The inability of the two Allies to work on a common plan, simply because they had different goals, weakened their already limited capacity to fight. Each Ally hung on to the hope of help from another Balkan nation: Greece from Yugoslavia and Britain from Turkey. Greece preferred an honourable and rapid defeat to the prolongation of a hopeless battle, which the British had their own reasons for favouring.

The British, seeing Greece merely as part of a gigantic puzzle in their Mediterranean strategy, did not want to lose the chance to exploit her to the utmost. They wanted to keep open the possibility of using Greece as a back door to mainland Europe and they wanted to engage as many enemy forces as possible. Their purpose was to drag Germany and Italy into a difficult war for which they were unprepared, which would drain their forces and, above all, distance them from other areas of more significance to Britain in the Mediterranean. Their purpose was only half achieved. The British lost Greece as a back door to mainland Europe, but managed to stall the Axis from extending their attack on other British possessions in the Middle East and to draw enemy forces onto inhospitable terrain. Even that success of theirs is doubtful, because it depends on how long they had expected to stall the Axis, how many enemy forces they had wanted to divert (and how many they actually diverted) and above all, at what cost to themselves. For Britain, Greece represented at that time the vital diversion of the Axis which enabled her to strengthen her own forces in the British Isles and in North Africa.

Greece understood that and decided not to become the victim of British strategy. The British military assistance to Greece in 1941 was close to nothing. The Greeks saw that the British plan was to stall the Germans in Greece from other targets to the south and reacted vigorously. But even that
help to Greece, small as it turned out to be, had as its aim to influence America. The British objective in Greece was not so much to reinforce the Greeks to fight the battle, or to beat the Germans, or even perhaps just to stall them, because all these plans were simply lacking in reality. Most of all, it was a scheme to show the world that despite what had happened in Poland, Britain was ethical and kept her promises to her Allies. When the British saw their inability and lack of adequate time, to form a unified Balkan front and to force the Greeks to abandon part of their territory for the sake of the rest (and of the general British war strategy which was not the Greeks'), decided to shift their main effort from stopping the Germans, which it was anyway very doubtful to achieve, to proving their support for the cause of a small Ally, even a lost cause.

It was far better for Britain to fight a hopeless battle for reasons of morality and prestige than to save its strength and lose its face. Greece was the Ally of Britain who with her spirited resistance and suicidal determination, had given the free and Allied world its first victory. Some might say that the Greek troops had merely contained the Italians in Albania. Yet Greece was the only Allied country and a small one which had managed to check the two major Axis powers, so it is reasonable to speak of a Greek epic. Up to April 1941, no other Allied country had fought so sustained a campaign against the Axis, not even France and Britain whose armies and equipment were far superior to Greece's. If we take into account that both Germany and Italy had tremendous numerical and material superiority over Greece, that their armies were more modern and more experienced, then Greece's fight can properly be described at least as a success over the Italians.

General Carlo Geloso, commander of the 11th Army in Albania, pointed out that the Italians were in danger of being thrown out of Albania:
"In November 1940, after the fall of Erseke [Erseka], the Ossum Valley was almost completely defenceless. The enemy dallied...against two battalions of customs guards. The Pusteria Alpine Division was thus enabled to reach the line and deploy in time. In December..... the Sciuscizza [Siousista] Valley and the coast road lay practically open to the enemy if he had made use of the opportunity..... In January 1941, after the fall of Klisura, the enemy had an open road in front of him towards Berati [Berat]. He stopped, and the Pinerolo and Cacciatori delle Alpi divisions moved in."

It is beyond any doubt, that the Greek capitulation to the Axis in April 1941 was the result of the German attack on Greece. Until the German attack, the Italians were being defeated. If it had not been for the superior German forces, the Greeks would not have been forced to withdraw and capitulate and the Italian retreat in Albania would in all probability, have continued. The last major Italian offensive, of March 1941, had ended in a humiliating defeat and it was very unlikely that they would have been quickly able to stage a new one.

However Italian Fascist propaganda commented on the end of the Balkan campaign as follows:

"It is not straining logic to conclude that at latest in the seventh month [of the fighting] the Italian army would have liquidated a Greek army that was exhausted in the sixth. The Axis operation in the Balkans provoked by the coup d'état in Belgrade and the intervention of the iron German divisions - together with the Yugoslav collapse - accelerated the Greek collapse, which was certain and inevitable."

Mussolini said of the Italian victory that "it is a mathematical certainty that, even if nothing had happened to change the Balkan situation, the Italian army would have overwhelmed and annihilated the Greek army in April". Both these statements above are false. First, because the Italian army was also exhausted by the six months fighting,
perhaps more than the Greek, and it had lost its morale and momentum after the continuous Greek victories. The Greek army was militarily exhausted by the fighting, but contrary to the Italian army, its spirit was very high. Until the German attack on Greece, there was not a single indication that the Italian army was about to stage a major offensive.

Geloso's statement above, is authoritative Italian support for the contention that the Greeks had been on brink of total victory over the Italians.

At that time, Britain preferred to send a token force into a doomed campaign rather than to allow its only victorious Ally to be swallowed unhindered. For Greece there was no other alternative. Her glorious past did not allow her any other escape exit than victory or death. And Britain decided to become the co-protagonist of a deadly modern Greek tragedy, of a country, whose independence, (not territorial integrity) Britain had explicitly, unilaterally, and solemnly guaranteed.
Chronology of Events

1939
7th April: Italy invades Albania
1st (3rd) September: Second World War starts

1940
10th June: Italy enters the Second World War
June-July-August: Italian provocations and violations towards Greece
15th August: The Greek ship *Helle* is being torpedoed by an Italian submarine
September: Italian forces in Albania increase
28th October: Italy invades Greece
9th November: Soddu replaces Prasca
14th November: A major Greek counter-attack starts
22nd November: Koritsa falls to the Greeks
30th November: Pogradec falls to the Greeks

: Badoglio resigns
4th December: Premeti falls to the Greeks
6th December: Santi Quaranta is occupied by Greek forces
8th December: Argyrokastron is captured by Greek troops
12th December: Cavagnari resigns
13th December: Hitler orders the attack on Greece
22nd December: The Greek army enters Khimara
28th December: Cavallero replaces Soddu

1941
10th January: Klisura falls to the Greeks
13th January: Wavell comes to Athens for important talks with Metaxas
29th January: Metaxas dies, replaced by Koryzis
22rd February: Eden, Dill, Longmore and Wavell come to Athens to plan along with the Greeks, the Allied defence in view of the German menace
1st March: Bulgaria enters the Tripartite Agreement, German troops enter Bulgaria
2nd-4th March: The British representatives return back to Athens and disagree with the Greeks over the question of the Allied defence line
5th March: B.E.F. sails for Greece
7th March: B.E.F. starts to disembark in Greece
9th March: The Italians launch their final attack in Albania
25th March: The end of the Italian final attack in Albania
: Yugoslavia enters the Tripartite Agreement
27th March: Coup d' état in Belgrade
: The Italian fleet accepts a humiliating defeat by the British battlefleet at Matapan
6th April: Germany attacks Greece and Yugoslavia, Piraeus harbour is being heavily bombed
9th April: German troops enter Salonika, E.M.A. surrenders
10th April: Italian troops link up with German ones in Lake Achrida
11th-14th April: Allied withdrawal to the Olympus-Servia line
13th April: The Greek army in Albania starts to withdraw
15th-19th: Allied withdrawal to Thermopylae line
18th April: Koryzis commits suicide, replaced by Tsouderos
20th April: Tsolakoglou, without authorization, capitulates to the Germans
21st April: Decision to evacuate the B.E.F.
23rd April: The Greek Government leaves for Crete
26th April: German airborne troops occupy the Corinth Canal
27th April: The Germans enter Athens
24th-30th April: British troops are being evacuated from Greece

20th May-1st June Battle of Crete takes place
By the end of the Greco-Italian and Greco-Italo-German War, the Greek Army had four Armies. The Epirus Army, the Western Macedonia Army, the Central Macedonia Army and the Eastern Macedonia Army. Altogether there were five Army Corps, though there were other large formations (such as the Divisional Group K and the Morova Divisional Group) in strength equivalent to army corps. By the end of the dual campaign in April 1941, the Greek army had twenty infantry divisions, of which one, the XIX was motorized. It also had one cavalry division, and eight brigades, seven infantry (the Nestos, Evros, III, IV, V, XVI and XXI Brigades) and one cavalry. It should be noted however, that some of the infantry brigades such as the IV and XVI and the Cavalry Brigade were enlarged during the war into larger formations. Thus the IV Infantry Brigade formed the later XV Infantry Division, the XVI Infantry Brigade formed the later XVI Infantry Division and the Cavalry Brigade was incorporated into the Cavalry Division. The III Infantry Brigade was from the very first divided and her forces were incorporated into the I and VIII Infantry Divisions.

When the Italians attacked Greece on 28th October 1940, there were in Epirus and Western Macedonia the following Greek forces:

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<th>Epirus</th>
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<td>I Army Corps</td>
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<td>VIII Infantry Division, III Infantry Brigade and the 39th Evzones Infantry Regiment on its way.</td>
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<th>Western Macedonia Army</th>
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<td>II Army Corps</td>
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<td>I, IX Infantry Divisions, the V Infantry Brigade and the frontier forces of the IXa</td>
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<tr>
<td>III Army Corps</td>
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X, XI Infantry Divisions, the IV Infantry Brigade and the frontier forces of IX, X, and XI.

**Pindus**

The Pindus Detachment with the 51st Infantry Regiment minus a battalion, plus a 75mm mountain artillery battery, a 65mm artillery section and a troop of cavalry.

All the above forces amounted around 39 infantry battalions and 40½ artillery batteries (35,000 men).

When the Germans attacked Greece on 6th April 1941 there were in Eastern Macedonia, Central Macedonia and Western Thrace the following Greek forces:

**Eastern Macedonia Army**

The VII, XIV and XVIII Infantry Divisions (the XIV and XVIII Infantry Division formed one Divisional Group), the Nestos Infantry Brigade and the Metaxas Line troops (around 10,000 men.)

**Western Thrace**

The Evros Brigade

All the above forces amounted around 30 infantry battalions and 31 artillery batteries.

**Central Macedonia Army**

The XII and XX Infantry Divisions

The Imperial Forces consisting of the 2nd New Zealand and 6th Australian Infantry Divisions and the 1st British Armoured Brigade (of the 2nd British Armoured Division).
By the end of the German campaign in Greece the Italian Army in Albania had the following formation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITALIAN ARMY</th>
<th>9th Army</th>
<th>11th Army</th>
<th>III Army Corps</th>
<th>IV Army Corps</th>
<th>XXV Army Corps</th>
<th>Special Army Corps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>XXVI Army Corps</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48th Taro</td>
<td>2nd Tridentina Alpini</td>
<td>5th Pusteria 22nd Cacciatori delle Alpi</td>
<td>24th Pinerolo 59th Cagliari</td>
<td>11th Brennero 58th Legnano</td>
<td>6th Cuneo 33rd Acqui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36th Forli</td>
<td>29th Piemonte</td>
<td>49th Parma</td>
<td>51st Siena</td>
<td>2nd Sforzesca 3rd Julia</td>
<td>3rd Julia Alpini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19th Venezia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7th Lupi di Toscana</td>
<td>23rd Ferrara</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In reserve were the 47th Bari and the 56th Casale.
On the eve of the German attack on Greece on 6th April 1941, the German army had the following formation:

12th Army

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Army Corps</th>
<th>Divisions and Regiments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>50th and 164th Infantry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVIII (Mountain)</td>
<td>5th and 6th Mountain, 2nd Armoured, 72nd Infantry, 125th Independent Reinforced Infantry Regiment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L (Reserve)</td>
<td>46th and 76th Infantry, 16th Armoured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armoured Corps</td>
<td>SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler Motorized Reinforced Infantry Regiment, 9th Armoured, 73rd Infantry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Armoured Group (Panzergroup)</td>
<td>198th Infantry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI</td>
<td>5th and 11th Armoured, 60th Motorized Infantry, 4th Mountain, 294th Infantry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV</td>
<td>1st SS Motorized Infantry Das Reich, General Hermann Goering Luftwaffe Regiment, Grossdeutschland Independent Motorized Infantry Regiment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the Yugoslav uprising, the whole of the First Armoured Group and the XLI Corps were transferred to the 2nd Army standing by to invade that country. Therefore, only three corps, the XXX, XL and XVIII took part in the attack on Greece. Additionally the 198th Division which was initially a reserve one, was assigned to the First Armoured Group, while one of the remaining three reserve divisions, the 16th Armoured was stationed on the Turkish borders. It should be noted however, that some of the forces of the First Armoured Group at the end of the campaign in Yugoslavia, were re-directed against Greece.
The Greek Airforce at the beginning of the Greco-Italian War had the following formation:

Two High Commands
The Army Air Force Command and the Navy Air Force Command

The Army Air Force Command included:
Fighter Command
Bomber Command
Military Cooperation Command

The Military Cooperation Command comprised of:
Armies Air Force Command
Army Corps Air Force Command

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Navy Air Force Command</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11th Naval Cooperation Sq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Fairey III F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Dornier 22 G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Avro Anson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fighter Command</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21st Fighter Command Sq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 P.Z.L. P 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Bloch MB 151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bomber Command</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31st Bomber Command Sq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Potez 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Blenheims Mk II, IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Fairey Battle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Military Cooperation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Military Cooperation Sq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Breguet 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Henschel 126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Potez 25A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally the Greek Air Force was equipped with the following second line machines:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second Line Aircraft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6       Hawker Horsley II torpedoe-planes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6       Avia B 534 biplane fighters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2       Gloster Gladiator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20      Avro Tutor 621 biplane trainers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22      Avro 626 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5       Junkers 52 (civic airforce)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Greek Air Force was also reinforced during the war (December 1940) by some planes given by the British:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R.A.F. Reinforcements to the Greek Air Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9   Gloster Gladiator of the 112th R.A.F. Sq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5   &quot;                                  80th &quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Battle Order of the Royal Air Force on 6th April 1941 was the following:

**Fighters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33rd Sq.</td>
<td>Hurricanes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80th Sq.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112th Sq.</td>
<td>Gladiators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30th Sq.</td>
<td>Blenheims IF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bombers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11th Sq.</td>
<td>Blenheims I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84th Sq.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113th Sq.</td>
<td>&quot; IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211th Sq.</td>
<td>&quot; I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37th Sq.</td>
<td>Wellington IC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reconnaissance**

- 208 Sq. Lysanders and Hurricanes
- 230 Sq. Sunderlands

**Fleet Air Arm**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fighters</td>
<td>805 Sq. Fulmars and Sea Gladiators in Crete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombers</td>
<td>815 Sq. Swordfish in mainland Greece and Crete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally there was the 257 Wing with the 38th, 70th and 148th Sqs. operating from Egypt.
R.A.F. Deployment on 6th April 1941

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Western Wing</th>
<th>Eastern Wing</th>
<th>Athens Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Bomber and one Fighter squadron (Gladiator) in support of the Greeks in Albania</td>
<td>Two Bomber and one Fighter squadron (Hurricane) support of the Anglo-Greek front in Aliakmon</td>
<td>One Bomber and one Fighter squadron for protection of Athens. The Fighter squadron was in process of being re-equipped with Hurricanes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Altogether the R.A.F. had 80 serviceable planes.
The German Battle Order on 6th April 1941 was the following:

Luftflotte 4

4(F)/121  Fliegerfuhrer Graz  Fliegerfuhrer Arad  Attached 2 Armee Austria/Hungary

Fliegerkorps VIII

2(F)/11  7/LG 2  Attached 12 Armee Bulgaria

In addition the Luftflotte 4 was supported with 576 planes from Sicily, France and Germany and 168 of the Fliegerkorps X stationed in Sicily.

Fliegerkorps VIII had around 650 first line machines (280 bombers, 150 dive-bombers, 90 single-engined fighters, 90 twin-engined fighters-bombers and 40 reconnaissance planes).
The Battle Order of the Greek Navy on the eve of the Greco-Italian War on 28th October 1940 was the following:

**Greek Navy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Battleships</th>
<th>Destroyers</th>
<th>Torpedo-Boats</th>
<th>Submarines</th>
<th>Mine Layer/Sweepers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kilkis (out of commission)</td>
<td>V. Georgios V. Olga 1,335 tons</td>
<td>Thiela</td>
<td>Katsonis</td>
<td>Axios, Strymon Nestos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Averof 9,350 tons</td>
<td>Kountouriotis, Hydra, Psara, Spetses 1,335 tons</td>
<td>Sfendoni Niki Aspis 350 tons</td>
<td>Papanikolis 556/775 tons</td>
<td>Nestos Aliakmon 500 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leon, Panther, Aetos, Ierax 1,033 tons</td>
<td>Prousa Pergamos</td>
<td>Proteus Glaukos Triton Nereus 730/960 tons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kyzikos Kios 240 tons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Doris Alkyonis Arethousa Agli 125 tons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition there was a small number of auxiliary and repair ships. It should be noted that both battleships were very old and obsolete. Kilkis was used solemnly as anti-aircraft defence and Averof as command of the fleet. One of the submarines, Glaukos, did not take part in the war due to lack of spares.
The Battle Order of the Italian Fleet on the eve of the Greco-Italian War on 28th October 1940 was the following:

**Italian Fleet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Battleships</th>
<th>Heavy Cruisers</th>
<th>Light Cruisers</th>
<th>Destroyers</th>
<th>Torpedo-Boats</th>
<th>Submarines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>119/121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Admiral Andrew Cunningham says in his own book, the strength of the British Fleet in the Mediterranean on 29th October 1940 was "four battleships, two aircraft-carriers, four cruisers and the usual destroyers". (A Sailor’s Odyssey p. 283)

However the strength of the British Fleet in the Mediterranean and the Gibraltar in late March 1941 before the Battle of Matapan, the German invasion and the subsequent British withdrawal was the following:

### British Mediterranean Fleet March 1941

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Battleships</th>
<th>Air.Carriers</th>
<th>Cruisers (both 6-inch and 5.25-inch)</th>
<th>Anti Aircraft Cruisers</th>
<th>Destroyers</th>
<th>Submarines (including those in Gibraltar)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warspite</td>
<td>Formidable</td>
<td>Orion, Gloucester, Ajax, Perth (Australian), Bonaventure</td>
<td>Calcutta, Carlisle, Coventry</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valiant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barham</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### British Fleet in Gibraltar (Force H)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Battleships</th>
<th>Aircraft Carriers</th>
<th>Cruisers 6-inch</th>
<th>Destroyers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Renown</td>
<td>Ark Royal</td>
<td>Sheffield</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above tables do not contain any ships seriously damaged, under repair or lent for special operations.
MAP No. 1
CRETE 1941

Sea of Crete

Sea of Mediterranean

Airfields thus O

Akrotiri Peninsula
Maleme
Kastelli
Gelatata
Alikianos
Telefisson
Suda Bay
Suda
Canea
Ayla Roumeli
Sphakia
Plaka
Heraklion
Georgopolis
Rethymno
Timbaki
Messara
Phalasparios Plain
Achikos
Gulf of Mirabella

Scale: 1/500,000

Scale: 10 20 30 40
MILES
THE GREEK OFFENSIVE
(14th Nov-28th December 1940)

Line held by the Greek forces on 13th Nov

Line occupied by the Greek Army by 28th December

SCALE 1:1500000
Original Contains Pullouts
Best Copy Available

Print bound close to the spine
ΔΙΑΤΑΞΗΣ ΤΟΥ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟΥ ΣΤΡΑΤΟΥ ΕΝ ΑΛΒΑΝΙΑ
Κατεχομένη γραμμή τη 6-1-41
κλίμαξ 1:1000.000

occupied line
κατεχομένη γραμμή
paved roads

Line of the Greek army in Albania on 6-1-41
bold Offensive Operations of the II Army Corps
6th November 1941
MAJOR ITALIAN OFFENSIVE IN SPRING 1941
(9th-25th March)

→ direction of main Italian effort

SCALE 1:1,500,000.
GERMAN OPERATIONS AGAINST
WESTERN MACEDONIA
9-20TH APRIL 1941

- Original Kaimakchalan-Vernion Position
- Varneu-Vernon-Malareka-Kerli
- Derven-Vogeritis Position (its extension to the south being the Vernion Position)
- Simiatika-Vourino-Mikron-Olympioy Pass (its extension to the north being the Vernion Pass)
- Direction of the German advance

SCALE 1:2,000,000
BALKANFELDZUG
12. ARMEE

5. Jugoslawische Armee
43.000 Gef.
Abbreviations
(found in the text, the references and the bibliography)

(ADM) Admiralty (Papers)
(AIR) Air Staff (Papers)
(ANZACS) Australian New Zealand Army Corps
(B.E.F.) British Expeditionary Force
(CAB) Cabinet (Papers)
(C.M.A.) Central Macedonian Army
(C.M.F.) Central Macedonian Front
(C.O.S.) Chiefs of Staff
(D.G.F.P.) Documents on German Foreign Policy
(D.o.A.F.H.) Directorate of Air Force History
(D.o.A.H.) Directorate of Army History
(D.o.N.H.) Directorate of Naval History
(E.A.) Epirus Army
(E.M.A.) Eastern Macedonian Army
F File*
Fs Files
(FO) Foreign Office
ft footnote
(G.A.F.G.S.) Greek Air Force General Staff
(G.A.G.S.) Greek Army General Staff
(G.M.o.F.A.) Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs
(G.N.G.S.) Greek Navy General Staff
(G.S.A.) General State Archives
(K.K.E.) Kommounistiko Komma Ellados (Greek Communist Party)
(M.R.) Military Review
(O.K.W.) Oberkommando der Wehrmacht
(R.H.A.) Royal Horse Artillery
(PREM) Premier's (Papers)
(PRO) Public Record Office
(R.A.F.) Royal Air Force
(U.S.A.) United States of America
The Greek Letters "Gamma" (small "γ"), "Delta" (small "δ"), "Eta" "Theta" (small "θ"), "Iota", "Sigma, Tough" and "Phi" (small "φ") usually found in the references and the bibliography, correspond to an identification code of a Greek file or sub-file.

For reasons of easy identification, Greek and Bulgarian army units are numbered with Latin (Roman) numbers and all the rest with Arabic.
References 1-21 (Introd.)

2) ibid and Terzakis Angelos *Elliniki Epopia 1940-1941* (Athens, 1980) p 11
4) ibid pp 1-3
7) Foreign Office (FO) 371/23780 No 129 R 2524/1877/19
9/11/39 Public Record Office (PRO)
8) FO 371/24866 Tel. No 27 from Durazzo to London 1/4/40
and FO 371/24866 R 7045/503/90 12/8/40 PRO
11) FO 371/24917 Tels. No 509 and 553 from London to Athens 17/8/40 and 24/8/40 PRO
14) FO 371/24915 R 5119/662/19 and FO 371/24915 Tel. No 211 from Athens to London 22/4/41 and FO 371/24916 R 8288/662/19 (1) 6/11/40 PRO
15) van Creveld Martin *Hitler's Strategy 1940-1941. The Balkan Clue* (Cambridge, 1973) pp 57, 84, 87
17) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 615/"T"/4
18) ibid Fs 613/ST/52 and 612/B/63
19) FO 371/24886 Military Review (M.R.)(40) 10 Report by Allied Military Committee "Allied Military Policy in the Balkans" 5/2/40 and Cabinet (CAB) 80/9 Chiefs of Staff (C.O.S.) (40) 299 Minutes 18/4/40 PRO
20) CAB 79/7 C.O.S.(40) 365 Meeting 21/10/40 PRO
21) FO 371/33145 PRO
References 1-181 (Ch.1)

1) Kokkinos Athanasios A., Oi Dio Polemoi 1940-1941, (Athens, 1945) p 71
3) Kovacs Frederick, The Untamed Balkans (London, 1942) p 31
4) Kokkinos, Oi Dio Polemoi 1940-1941, p 73-75
5) Schevill op.cit. p 478
7) Kokkinos op.cit pp 80-89
8) ibid p 80
10) Kotzias op.cit p 96
11) ibid
12) Mackenzie op.cit p 7
13) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 21
14) Kokkinos op.cit. p 93
16) Genadios Library Tsouderos Papers. F 7 “The Dodecanesian Question” a study by Ambassador Pipinelis, p 54
17) ibid p 52
19) Kokkinos, Oi Dio Polemoi pp 150-151
20) ibid pp 133-135
21) Mackenzie op.cit p 10-11 and Kokkinos op.cit pp 184-191
22) General State Archives (G.S.A.) Tsouderos Papers. F 6 Address given by Kaklamanos 7/11/40 in the Royal Institute of International Affairs p 8
24) ibid pp 185-186, 191-193
26) Mack Smith Denis, *Mussolini* (Great Britain, 1983) p 177
27) Mackenzie op.cit p 12
29) Kovacs, *The Untamed Balkans* p 58 and Grazzi op.cit pp 33-35
30) Mack Smith, *Mussolini* p 177
31) ibid
33) G.S.A. Tsouderos Papers. F 6 p 9
35) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 21
36) Svolopoulos, *Elliniki Exoteriki Politiki 1900-1945*, p 70
37) ibid p 70
38) Svolopoulos op. cit. p 76
41) Schevill, *A History of the Balkans*, p 480
42) Svolopoulos, *Elliniki Exoteriki Politiki 1900-1945*, p 96
43) Enepekides op. cit p 317
44) Genadios Library. Tsouderos Papers. F 11 "The Bulgarian Question" a study by Ambassador Pipinelis pp 29-30
46) Genadios Library. Tsouderos Papers. F 11. op.cit p 36
47) Kovacs, *The Untamed Balkans*, p 56. The phrase belongs to Count Sforza.
50) ibid pp 164-166 and Tsaparas vol. II op.cit. p 112
51) ibid p 188 and Tsaparas vol. II op.cit. pp 223-233
52) Tsaparas vol. II op.cit. p 226
55) G.S.A. Metaxas Papers. F 101(b) "Turkey" p 28
61) Geramanis vol.I op.cit. p 40
62) ibid p 40
63) Genadios Library. Tsouderos Papers. F 11 p 7
64) Kyrou, *Elliniki Exoteriki Politiki*, p 74
65) Genadios Library. Tsouderos Papers. F 11 p 12
66) ibid p 17
67) ibid p 26. On the issue of Bulgarian occupation and claims upon the area of Eastern Macedonia and Western Thrace see Fleischer Hagen, *Stemma kai Svastika. I Ellada tis Katohis kai tis Antistasis 1941-1944* (vols. I, II and III Athens) [n.d.] vol. I pp 90-106. Fleischer also writes about British attempts to win over Bulgaria throughout World War II by offering territorial concessions at the expense of Greece and Yugoslavia, and the creation of a Macedonian Committee aiming at establishing an independent Macedonia with which the pro-German Bulgarian Government could be overthrown.
68) Clogg op.cit. p 127
69) G.S.A. Metaxas Papers. F 100. "Albania" p 14
70) Kyrou op.cit. p 199
71) Kovacs, *The Untamed Balkans*, p 141
72) ibid p 141 and Svolopoulos, *Elliniki Exoteriki Politiki 1900-1945*, p 249
74) Mackenzie op.cit. p 14
75) Kovacs op.cit p 58
Kriegsakademie, and as Greek Chief of Staff, he was against the Anglo-French enterprise to occupy the Straits in 1914-1915 and to lend Greek support for it. On the character of Metaxas and his regime, also see Higham Robin and Veremis Thanos (ed.) *Aspects of Greece 1936-40. The Metaxas Dictatorship* (ELIAMEP-Vlyonis Center, Athens, 1993) pp 15-40, 147-192. See also Close David H., *The Origins of the Greek Civil War* (London, 1995) pp 42-56

77) "It is essential to remember that it is not the memory of 'Lordos [Lord] Byron' which keeps or may keep Greece faithful to Great Britain...." Report of the British Institute of International Affairs cited in Kovacs op.cit p 61


79) Tsaparas op.cit. p 323


81) Svolopoulos, *Elliniki Exoteriki Politiki 1900-1945*, p 258


84) Tsaparas, *I Politiki Igesia kai Oi Xenoi stin Sihroni Istoria tis Ellados 1920-1946*, vol.II p 324

85) ibid pp 324-325

86) Documents on German Foreign Policy (D.G.F.P.) Series D vol. VIII. No 310 Tel.341 The State Secretary to the Legation in Greece. 28/10/39

87) Koliopoulos op.cit p 89. As early as December 1936 Metaxas had said to the British Minister Sydney Waterlow that Greece was irrevocably and unreservedly pro-British. In 1938 he had told Waterlow that Greece would fight Italy if the latter attacked Greece, but he was prepared to provide the British with bases and facilities in Greece. According to Mark Dragoumis, Metaxas was following the policy of
benevolent neutrality in favour of Britain rather than Germany as Greece did in the First World War. Dragoumis Mark, *Greece at War 1940–1945* (Athens, 1995) pp 17-18. Towards the end of his life, Metaxas had been aware of his mistake, his inclination towards Germany during World War I. He writes in his diary: “Will God forgive us for 1915? We are all to blame! and Venizelos too! – Now I realise how much I was to blame.” *Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933–1941* vol.VIII p 556 and pp 742-743


89) Sweet-Escott Bickham, *Greece. A Political and Economic Survey 1939–1953* (London, 1954) p 13. Kovacs’s figures for the period 1929–1938 are: Greek exports to Germany 19 to 43.2 and Greek imports from Germany 10 to 31.1 op.cit p 150. Clogg’s figures for the period 1930–1938 are: Greek exports to Germany 24 to 39 and Greek imports from Germany 10 to 29 op.cit p 135

90) Tsaparas vol.II op.cit p 328. The main Greek exports, over 80%, were agricultural products, such as figs, currants, fresh fruits, cotton and cereals. She also exported marble. In mid 30’s Germany imported almost half of Greek tobacco, fresh fruits, wines and few minerals. Germany exported to Greece large quantities of iron, steel manufactured pieces, coke, and coal. Britain too, exported to Greece coal which was urgently necessary for the railways. Unfortunately, Greece was very poor in mineral resources. She had a very low output of lead (24,000 tons in 1934), manganese, nickel (50,000 tons in 1938), chrome (40,000 tons), magnesite (170,000 tons), lignite (100,000 tons), bauxite (180,000 tons) and iron pyrites (240,000 tons in 1938). Most of these minerals were exported, and were not used for the domestic market. But Greece had an increasingly large merchant navy. By 1938, Greece had 600 ocean-going ships totalling 1,870,000 tons (Kovacs writes 2,500,000) placing her tenth in the world for tonnage and third for tonnage per capita of her
population. That number of ships does not include 700 small vessels for internal traffic and transporting goods. Higham Robin and Veremis Thanos (ed.) Aspects of Greece 1936-40. The Metaxas Dictatorship op.cit pp 42, 111-128, 227-240 and Kovacs op.cit pp 50, 165 ft 1
91) Clogg op.cit. p 135
92) Kovacs, The Untamed Balkans, p 150
93) 40 Hronia Argotera, (Athens, 1980) No.2
95) G.M.o.F.A. The Greek White Book, No.13
96) 40 Hronia Argotera, No.15
97) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 21
98) Grazzi, I Arhi tou Telous. I Epihirisi kata tis Ellados, p 17
99) Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941, vol.VIII p 364
100) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 659/A/3
101) FO 371/23780 Tel. No 322 from Rome to London 12/4/39 PRO
102) FO 371/23780 Tel. No 182 from Athens to London 5/5/39 PRO
103) G.M.o.F.A. The Greek White Book, No.23
104) FO 371/23780 Draft. Prime Minister to Signor Mussolini p 34 PRO
106) G.M.o.F.A. The Greek White Book, Nos.18,29,30
107) ibid No.34
108) Koliopoulos Greece and the British Connection 1935-1941, p 112
109) FO 371/23780 Enclosure 2 PRO
110) Svolopoulos, Elliniki Exoteriki Politiki 1900-1945, p 263
111) G.M.o.F.A. The Greek White Book, Nos.39,40,43
112) Muggeridge Malcolm (ed.) Ciano's Diary 1939-1943, pp 87, 92
113) 40 Hronia Argotera, No.45
115) Grazzi, I Arhi tou Telous. I Epihirisi kata tis Ellados, p 79
116) Muggeridge Malcolm (ed.) Ciano's Diary 1939-1943, p 151
117) Grazzi op.cit p 79
118) Koliopoulos op. cit p 115
119) FO 371/23780 R7797/1877/19 Minute by Sir Orme Sergeant 15/9/39 PRO
120) FO 434/6 Tel. No 407 from Athens to London 16/9/39 PRO
121) Svolopoulos, Elliniki Exoteriki Politiki 1900-1945, p 266
122) Grazzi op. cit p 92
123) ibid p 112
124) G.M.o.F.A. The Greek White Book, Nos. 58-61
126) G.M.o.F.A./ F1 Tel. No 786/"Θ" from Santi Quaranta to Athens 30/4/40
127) 40 Hronia Argotera, Nos. 67, 69
128) G.M.o.F.A./ F1 Tel. No 679/B/1 from Valona to Tirana 25/5/40
129) ibid Tels. No 785/6/40/ from Corfu to Athens 11/6/40 and No. 1545/5/5 from Tirana to Athens 30/6/40
130) Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941, vol. VIII pp 474-475
131) G.A.G.S/D.o.A.H. F 21
133) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 659/A/3
134) Muggeridge Malcolm (ed.) Ciano's Diary 1939-1943, p 274
135) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 659/A/3
136) Muggeridge Malcolm (ed.) Ciano's Diary 1939-1943, p 281
137) ibid p 283
138) 40 Hronia Argotera, No. 108
139) Mackenzie op. cit p 40
140) Grazzi op. cit p 129
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141) Cunningham Andrew, A Sailor’s Odyssey (London, 1951) pp 232, 236, 282


143) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 21

144) Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941, vol.VIII pp 491-492

145) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. Fs 659/A/3 and 21

146) Cervi Mario, The Hollow Legions. Mussolini’s Blunder in Greece 1940-1941, (London, 1972) p 30. The next day, 16/8/40 during the Cabinet meeting Metaxas had stated that: "...Greece’s policy is clear. A hundred percent, without reservations and horse trading we are on the side of England". Then he allowed any of the Ministers who might have had different opinion or reservations to leave the room. No one left. Then he proceeded by stating why he had been disenchanted with the policy of Germany. Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941 vol.VIII pp 742-743

147) G.M.o.F.A. The Greek White Book, No.114

148) D.G.F.P. Series D. vol.X No 333 Tel.376 The Minister in Greece to the Foreign Ministry 13/8/40 and Grazzi, I Arhi tou Telous. I Epihirisi kata tis Ellados, p 201

149) Muggeridge Malcolm (ed.) Ciano’s Diary 1939-1943, p 284

150) Grazzi op.cit p 153

151) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 659/A/3

152) FO 371/24917 Tel. No 1047 from Ankara to London 23/8/40 PRO


154) Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941 vol. VIII p 502

155) G.M.o.F.A. The Greek White Book, Nos.127,152
156) Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941 vol.VIII p 499
157) G.S.A. Metaxas Papers F 68
158) D.G.F.P. Series D vol. X No 394 Memorandum by an Official of the Foreign Minister’s Secretariat. Reception of the Greek Minister Rizo Rangabé by the Reich Foreign Minister in Fuschl. 26/8/40
159) G.M.o.F.A. F12 Conversation of the President of the Government Mr. John Metaxas with the British Ambassador in Athens Sir Michael Palairet. 22/8/40
160) FO 371/24917 Tels. No 553 and 554 from London to Athens 24/8/40 PRO
161) ibid
163) Kollopoulos, Greece and the British Connection 1935-1941 p 138
164) G.M.o.F.A. F 12 Tel. No 2091 from Tirana to Athens 9/9/40
165) D.G.F.P. Series D vol.X No 387 Memorandum by the Director of the Political Department. Berlin 24/8/40
166) Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941 vol.VIII p 502
167) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 21
168) Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941 vol.VIII p 498
169) Papagos The Battle of Greece 1940-1941, pp 84-85 and Interview with Mr. Leonidas Papagos 4/4/94
170) FO 371/24917 Tel. No 742 from Athens to London 24/8/40 PRO
171) Muggeridge Malcolm (ed.) Ciano’s Diary 1939-1943 p 297
172) D.G.F.P. Series D vol.X No 388 Benito Mussolini to Adolf Hitler. Rome 24/8/40
173) Muggeridge Malcolm (ed.) Ciano’s Diplomatic Papers, p 392
174) FO 371/24919 Tel. No 214 from Geneva to London 11/10/40 PRO
175) G.M.o.F.A. The Greek White Book, No. 163 and Vlachos, 
Mia Fora kai Ena Kero Enas Diplomatis (50 Kivernisis), pp 60-61
176) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 613/ΣΤ"/79
177) 40 Hronia Argotera, Nos. 168-169 and 170
178) FO 371/24877 Tel. No 769 from Belgrade to London 15/10/40 and FO 371/24919 Tel. No 2376 from Washington to London 22/10/40 PRO
180) CAB 79/7 C.O.S. Meeting 21/10/40 PRO
181) FO 371/24920 Tel. No 1466 from Bucharest to London 29/10/40 and FO 371/24919 Tel. No 1003 from Athens to London 29/10/40 PRO
References 1-230 (Ch.2)

1) van Creveld, *Hitler's Strategy 1940-1941 The Balkan Clue* p 9
2) Muggeridge Malcolm (ed.), *Ciano's Diary 1939-1943* p 275
3) Muggeridge Malcolm (ed.), *Ciano's Diplomatic Papers* pp 375-377
4) van Creveld op.cit p 4. The importance of Yugoslavia for the Reich was great. According to Kovacs, in 1935 German imports from Yugoslavia and exports to her amounted about 15%, whereas in 1938 that figured increased to 50% for both exports and imports. Yugoslav mines produced about 410,000 tons of bauxite or aluminium ore, 765,000 tons of copper, the largest in Europe, 880,000 tons of lead and large quantities of iron ore, antimony and silver. Kovacs, *The Untamed Balkans* pp 149, 165 ft 1.
5) Cruickshank Charles *Greece 1940-1941* (London, 1976) p 28. In 1938 Rumanian exports to Germany had reached 35.9 from 12.5 in 1932. Rumanian imports from Germany had also risen from 23.6 in 1932 to 48.5 in 1938. Also fodder, oleaginous plants, soya beans and timber were exported in large quantities to Germany. Kovacs op.cit p 147
8) D.G.F.P. Series D vol. X No 73 Memorandum by an Official of the Foreign Minister's Secretariat. Berlin 1/7/40
9) Grazzi, *I Arhi tou Telous. I Epihirisi kata tis Ellados* p 133
212) D.G.F.P. Series D vol.X No 129 Memorandum by an Official of the Foreign Minister's Secretariat. Berlin. 8/7/40
11) Schacher Gerhard *Germany Pushes South-East* (London, 1937) p 235
12) Koliopoulos op.cit p 173
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14) Stewart op. cit p 5
15) Mack Smith, Mussolini pp 298-299
16) van Creveld op.cit p 22
17) Mack Smith op.cit p 299
18) Muggeridge Malcolm (ed.) Ciano's Diary 1939-1943 p 301. The German Minister in Athens was unaware of the Italian move against Greece and have found out about the Italian ultimatum at 0300 on 28th October. Additionally, Germany regarded the Greco-Italian War as Italy’s business and that the former had no intention of mediating. Iatrides John (ed.) Ambassador MacVeagh Reports: Greece, 1933-1947 p 270
19) D.G.F.P. Series D vol. XI No 225 Tel.1904 The Ambassador in Italy to the Foreign Ministry 24/10/40 and No 242 Tel.1945 The Chargé d' Affaires in Italy to the Foreign Ministry and to the Special Train of the Foreign Minister 27/10/40
20) Koliopoulos op.cit p 142
21) Memoirs of Ernest von Weizsacker (London, 1951) p 244
22) Cruickshank, Greece 1940-1941, p 37
23) van Creveld op.cit p 48
24) Muggeridge Malcolm (ed.) Ciano's Diary 1939-1943 p 300
25) Memoirs of Ernest von Weizsacker p 244
26) ibid p 244
27) Cruickshank op.cit p 39
29) Touch and Go. The Battle For Crete 1941 (London, 1991) p 8
30) Cruickshank, Greece 1940-1941, p 39
31) van Creveld op.cit p 50
32) Beevor op.cit p 72
33) van Creveld op.cit p 50
34) ibid p 49
35) ibid p. 48
36) ibid p. 49
38) Mack Smith, *Mussolini* p. 299
39) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 734
40) Mack Smith op.cit p 299
41) Buckley Christopher, *Greece and Crete 1941* (London, 1952) p. 8
42) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. Fs 614/"T" and 614/"Δ"; Crazzi op.cit pp 258–262 and Mack Smith op.cit p 301 and Cervi op.cit pp 74–75
43) Cervi, *The Hollow Legions Mussolini's Blunder in Greece 1940–1941*, p. 188
44) Mack Smith, *Mussolini*, p. 301
45) Cartie vol. II op.cit p 172
46) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 614
47) Grazzi op.cit p 208
48) Mack Smith, *Mussolini* p. 300
50) Muggeridge Malcolm (ed.) *Ciano’s Diary 1939–1943* p 299
51) ibid p 298
52) Cruickshank, *Greece 1940–1941*, pp. 41–42
53) Mack Smith, *Mussolini*, p. 300
55) Mack Smith, *Mussolini*, p. 301
57) Cervi op.cit p 89
58) Mack Smith, *Mussolini*, p. 300
59) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 614
60) Cervi op.cit pp 167–168
61) Muggeridge Malcolm (ed.) *Ciano’s Diary 1939–1943*, p 300
62) Buckley, *Greece and Crete 1941*, p 9
According to Mark Dragoumis between April 1939-October 1940 the Bulgarian sector received 90.4% of military expenditure in contrast with the 9.6% of the Albanian. He questions whether the continuous negligence of the General Staff towards the Albanian front in view of the obvious danger, lay into the belief within the Greek Headquarters that a war with Italy would be increasingly short. Dragoumis op.cit p 20
86) ibid F 626/IB/2
87) ibid F 760
88) ibid F 760 and G.S.A. Metaxas Papers F 106
89) ibid
90) ibid F 22 Katheniotis Report pp 17-25
91) FO 371/24917 Tel. No 726 from Athens to London 22/8/40 PRO and Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941 vol.VIII p 474
93) ibid F 21
94) ibid F 653/A/1. As Robin Higham claims Greek armed forces were faced with the diversity of supply problem. Not only the Greeks were supplied with weapons that came from predominantly hostile countries, but also from countries which had either been overrun by the Axis or had aligned with it. That was the disadvantage of the Metaxas’s regime. Metaxas’s clearing agreement with Germany benefited Greek foreign trade since Germany absorbed large quantities of Greek agricultural products, but also enforced on Greece the obligation to buy most of her armaments from Germany. For example, the Greek artillery guns came from Krupp in Germany, Skoda in Czechoslovakia and Schneider in France. As the reader can see, neither Germany nor Czechoslovakia, which had been part of Germany would have supplied the Greeks with guns to fight Germany’s ally, Italy. Similarly, France needed all the guns for herself against Germany, and after she was occupied there was not any possibility of assisting Greece. Robin Higham and Veremis Thanos (ed.) Aspects of Greece 1936-40. The Metaxas Dictatorship pp 41-60, 227-240. See G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. I pros Polemon Proparaskevi tou Ellinikou Stratou 1923-1940, (Athens,1969) 95) ibid F 21
96) G.A.F.G.S./D.o.A.F.H F The 31st Bomber Squadron. In the air force the situation was even worse, as the reader can observe by glancing at the types of the planes. Not only the Greeks were supplied with few and obsolete machines, but
with the exception of few British planes, the rest came from Poland, France and Germany, the former occupied by the latter. See G.A.F.G.S./D.o.A.F.H.  _I Istoria tis Ellinikis Aeroporias 1930-1940_, (vol.III Athens, 1940)

97) G.S.A. Metaxas Papers Fs. 83, 88 and Phokas op.cit pp 65-66. The de-commissioned _Averof_ was of Italian design, the sunk _Helle_ of British, two other destroyers were Italian-built. Three more destroyers were British-built with American guns, plus three German-design torpedo-boats and five French-built submarines. All those ships could not be easily serviced because they needed different spares from different countries. Additionally, the types of ammunition were different. On that issue see Phokas op.cit pp 24-28 and Higham Robin and Veremis Thanos (ed.) _Aspects of Greece 1936-40. The Metaxas Dictatorship_ p 47

98) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 679/K/1 and Phokas op.cit pp 66-68

99) ibid F 679/K/1

100) Cunningham op.cit p 283

101) Cervi op.cit p 110

102) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 653/A/1

103) ibid F 21


105) Linardatos, _O Ioannis Metaxas kai Oi Megales Dinamis (1936-1940)_ pp 126-127 and Clogg op.cit p 128 and Metaxas. _To Imerologio tou 1933-1941_ vol.VIII pp 544-545 and Fleischer op.cit p 67 and Higham Robin and Veremis Thanos (ed.) _Aspects of Greece 1936-1940. The Metaxas Dictatorship_ pp 33-34. Before the 1935 _putsch_ there was another Venizelist coup in 1933 which was short-lived and which was followed by deep purges in the military, police and public sector as well. Over one-fifth of army officers and over one-quarter of gendarmerie officers, in total about 1,800 Venizelist army officers were purged. Before the war Papagos and the King were against the re-enlistment of those
Venizelists. During the war however, some Venizelist officers were readmitted, but they were not given combat roles, and still 1,500 remained out of duty. Those not re-enlisted were of higher ranks and very experienced. Gerolymatos André, *Guerilla Warfare and Espionage in Greece, 1940-4* (New York, 1992) p 28 cited in Close David H., *The Origins of the Greek Civil War* (London, 1995) p 34. FO 371/20389/Waterlow to Eden, 18 March 1936 cited in Close op.cit p 38 and Gerolymatos op.cit p 194 cited in Close op.cit p 54 and Close op.cit p 41

106) CAB 66/1 PRO
109) FO 371/24918 Tels. No 777 from Athens to London 30/8/40 and No.586 from London to Athens 1/9/40 PRO
111) FO 371/24917 C.O.S. Meeting 23/8/40 PRO
112) Woodward op.cit p 514
113) Woodward op.cit p 514
114) ibid p 514
115) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. Fs 662/A and F 762/A/2
116) Katsimetros op.cit pp 60-65
117) ibid p 63
118) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 21
119) ibid F 21
120) Katsimetros op.cit p 87
121) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 601/A
123) ibid p 90
124) Katsimetros op.cit p 100
125) War Office (WO) 201/18 PRO
126) Soulis D.D. *To Kosmoistorikon "OXI" tis Eonias Ellados* (Athens, 1946) p 51
127) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 653/A/1
128) ibid F 668/A/8
129) ibid Fs 668/B/”H” and 21
130) Kastanis George. I Epopiia tis Ellados 1940-1944 (Athens 1948) p 40
131) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 21
132) WO 201/18 PRO
133) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H F 21
134) Cruickshank, Greece 1940-1941, p 43
135) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 653/A/1
136) Cruickshank, Greece 1940-1941, p 44
137) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 21
138) Soulis op. cit p 41
139) Katsimetros op. cit pp 141-143
140) Koliatsos Christos, Selides Doxas, (Athens, 1948) p 58
141) WO 201/18 PRO
142) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 614
143) Cervi op. cit pp 178-179
144) WO 201/68 and 201/56 PRO
145) ibid 201/11 PRO
146) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 614
147) WO 201/11 PRO
148) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. Fs 614, 609/A/1 and WO 201/11 PRO
149) Cervi op. cit pp 137-138 and WO 201/11 PRO
150) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 614
151) WO 201/11 PRO
152) Katsimetros op. cit p 188
153) Cervi op. cit pp 179, 181
154) WO 201/11 PRO and Katsimetros op. cit. p 187
155) WO 201/11 PRO
156) van Creveld op. cit p 56 and Cervi op. cit pp 160, 178-179, 187
157) ibid p 56
159) ibid and Greek Navy General Staff (G.N.G.S.)/Directorate of Naval History (D.o.N.H.) “Φ” 3B/“Θ” 1 F 38. The aim of this raid was “the moral reinforcement of the left of the [Greek]
pressed troops, the demonstration by our [Navy's] appearance of the close cooperation [between] Army and Navy, demonstration that the Fleet can freely move in the Corfu Straits even though the western side of Epirus is in the hands of the adversary. Additionally, material damage [inflicted on] the enemy, if this is possible."


161) G.N.G.S./D.o.N.H. "Ψ"3Β/"Θ"1 Fs 1 and 49; Phokas op.cit p 120-133, 173-182, 208-211 and Kavvadias op.cit pp 172-183, 185-197. The main, almost only reason for those raids was the public demonstration that the navy contributed to the war.

162) Varfis Constantine I Simasia tou Egeou kai i Drasi tou P. Naftikou ston Ellino-Italiko Polemo 1940-1941 (Salonika, 1992) p 20


164) Varfis op.cit pp 19-20

165) Bragadin Marc Antonio The Italian Navy in World War II (Annapolis, 1957) p 43

166) ibid p 78

167) ibid p 79

168) ibid p 79

169) ibid p 79

170) G.A.F.G.S./D.o.A.F.H. F 101

171) ibid F The 31 Bomber Squadron


175) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 680/E/19


177) Koliopoulos, Greece and the British Connection 1935-1941, p 170
178) Ibid and Dragoumis op. cit p 25: He says that the Greek General Staff was not optimistic at all about the prospect of repulsing the Italians. Papagos wished mainly to save the honour of Greek arms.

179) Geramanis vol. I op. cit pp 135-136

180) Ibid p 136

181) Koliopoulos op. cit pp 170-171

182) Papagos op. cit pp 246-247, 255, 262

183) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. Fs 622/A/1, 683/B/2 and 692/A/1 and Katsimetros op. cit p 46

184) Ibid Fs 623/A/63, 632/A/62 and 693/B/2

185) FO 371/24914 Tel. No 239 from Athens to London 28/9/40 PRO; Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941 vol. VIII pp 492-494

186) Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941 vol. VIII pp 494-496, 510-511, 530 and D.G.F.P. Series D vol. XI No 226 Tel. 514 The Minister in Greece to the Foreign Ministry 24/10/40

187) Geramanis vol. I op. cit pp 142-143

188) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 647/A/1b

189) Ibid F 21

190) Ibid F 622/A/1

191) Ibid F 623/A/86

192) Ibid F 653/A/1

193) Ibid F 21

194) WO 201/124 PRO

195) Cruickshank, Greece 1940-1941, p 46

196) WO 201/11 PRO

197) Ibid 201/124 PRO

198) Cruickshank op. cit p 47


200) Soulis op. cit pp 54-55

201) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 653/A/1

202) Ibid F 21

203) WO 201/124 PRO
204) ibid
205) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 21
206) ibid F 653/A/1
207) WO 201/124 PRO
208) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 21
209) ibid F 679/K/9
210) G.A.F.G.S./D.o.A.F.H. F The 31st Bomber Squadron and F
101
211) Geramanis vol.I op.cit pp 165-166
212) ibid pp 165-166
213) Cervi op.cit p 196
214) Koliatsos op.cit p 152
215) Terzakis Angelos, Elliniki Epopiia 1940-1941, p 150
216) Muggeridge Malcolm (ed.) Ciano’s Diary 1939-1943 p 311
217) Cervi op.cit p 163
218) WO 201/48 PRO and Muggeridge Malcolm (ed.) Ciano’s Diary 1939-1943 p 320
219) Cervi op.cit pp 180-181
220) ibid
221) Muggeridge Malcolm (ed.) Ciano’s Diary 1939-1943 p 319 and Cervi op.cit p 195
222) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. I Italiki Iswoli 28 Oktovriou-13
Noemvriou 1940, p 271 and Cervi op.cit p 157
223) Muggeridge Malcolm (ed.) Ciano’s Diary 1939-1943, p 307
Italikou Polemou 1940-1941, pp 193-194
225) Gregoriades op.cit p 189
226) Muggeridge Malcolm (ed.) Ciano’s Diary 1939-1943, p 306
227) ibid p 313
228) Cervi, The Hollow Legions. Mussolini’s Blunder in Greece
1940-1941, p 168
229) Geramanis vol.I op.cit pp 167-168
230) ibid pp 167-168
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1) Alfieri Dino, Dictators Face to Face, (London, 1947) pp 81-82
2) ibid p 85
3) van Creveld op.cit p 103
4) Muggeridge Malcolm (ed.) Ciano's Diary 1939-1943, p 320
5) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H F 653/I“Λ”/3 and Alfieri op.cit p 86
6) "Brassey's Naval Annual 1948," (London, 1948) p 170
7) ibid pp 172-173
8) ibid p 155 and van Creveld op.cit pp 104-105
9) Alfieri, Dictators Face to Face, p 88
10) van Creveld op.cit p 106
11) ibid pp 106-108
12) Cervi, The Hollow Legions. Mussolini's Blunder in Greece 1940-1941, p 206
13) van Creveld op.cit p 108
14) ibid p 109
16) D.G.F.P. Series D vol.VIII No 514 Memorandum by General Jodl on the Policy and the War Effort in the East. 6/1/40
17) Cruickshank, Greece 1940-1941, p 9
18) Burdick Charles and Jacobsen Hans-Adolf (ed.) The Halder War Diary 1939-1942, p 274
19) Koliopoulos op.cit p 185
25) Cruickshank, *Greece 1940-1941*, p 74
26) Liddell Hart, *The Other Side of the Hill*, p 283
27) Koliopoulos op.cit p 186 and Warlimont op.cit p 129
28) Hinsley, Thomas, *Ransom, Knight* op.cit p 260
29) Warlimont op.cit pp 128-129
30) Cruickshank, *Greece 1940-1941*, p 75
31) Brassey's op.cit pp 165-166
32) Cruickshank, *Greece 1940-1941*, pp 76-77, Brassey's op.cit pp 154-155 and Gregoriades op.cit pp 22
33) van Creveld op.cit pp 92-94 and Gregoriades op.cit p 22
36) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 21
37) Terzakis, *Elliniki Epopiia 1940-1941*, p 157
38) van Creveld op.cit p 106 and Cervi op.cit p 201
39) Gregoriades op.cit p 159 and van Creveld op.cit p 106
40) Cervi op.cit p 201
41) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 653/A/1
42) WO 201/124 PRO
43) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 21
44) *Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941* vol.VIII pp 538, 540-542, 547
45) FO 371/29827 Tel. No 3/st/41 from Simopoulos to FO 1/1/41 PRO and *Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941* vol. VIII pp 541-542, 545, 547-549
46) *Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941* vol.VIII p 541
47) WO 201/124 PRO
48) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 622/A/2
49) ibid F 653/A/2
50) ibid F 686/A/1
51) ibid Fs 643/A/5 and 683/A/3
53) FO 371/24914 Tel. No 1394 from Athens to London 20/12/40 PRO; Mackenzie op.cit 122; Koliopoulos op.cit p 190; Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941 vol. VIII p 546
54) FO 371/29818 Tel. No 26 from Athens to London 5/1/41 PRO; Cervi op.cit 203
56) ibid F 22 pp 836-838
57) ibid F 22 pp 919-964, 957; Geramanis vol.I op.cit p 257
58) Geramanis vol.I op.cit pp 274-276
59) ibid p 286
60) Koliopoulos op.cit p 173
62) G.A.G.S./D.oA.H F 644/"ΣΤ"/1 and F 21
63) Cervi op.cit p 231
64) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 44
65) ibid F 44
66) ibid F 634/"Φ"/A2
67) ibid
68) ibid F 21
69) ibid Fs 21 and 653/A/1; WO 201/124 PRO
70) Cruickshank, Greece 1940-1941, pp 132-133
71) G.A.G.S./D.oA.H. F 653/A/1
72) ibid F 644/"ΣΤ"/1
73) ibid
74) ibid F 21
75) WO 201/124 PRO
76) G.A.G.S./D.oA.H F 609/A/1
77) ibid F 679/K/9
78) The Italian submarine was not possibly sunk. Phokas op.cit pp 360-362, 302-303
81) ibid pp 1003, 1090-1095
82) ibid Fs 681/A/2 and 682/E/1
83) ibid F 44 and Himerines Epithesis-Italiki Epithesis 7 January-26 March 1941, p 157
84) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 44
86) ibid p 154
87) ibid p 155
88) Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941, vol.VIII pp 482-483
89) ibid pp 494-496, 510-511, 530
90) FO 371/24921 Tels. No 1289 and 1110 from Athens to London 7/12/40 and from London to Athens 14/12/40 PRO See also FO 371/24920 Tel. No 1041 from London to Athens 1/11/40
91) ibid
92) Burdick Charles and Jacobsen Hans-Adolf (ed.) The Halder War Diary 1939-1942, pp 295-296
93) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 612/B/3. On 4th January 1941 the Greek Military Attaché in Berlin informed Metaxas that the Germans aimed at driving through Yugoslavia and seizing Salonika. Dragoumis, Greece at War 1940-1945 p 32
94) ibid F 613/ΓΣΣ/52
95) ibid Fs 655, 612, 735
96) ibid F 612/B/16
97) FO 371/24921 Tel. No 1349 from Athens to London 16/12/40 PRO
98) Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941, vol.VIII p 530, 549, 555
99) ibid p 549
100) FO 371/29818 Tel. No 54 from Belgrade to London 11/1/41 PRO
101) Koliopoulos op. cit p 189; van Creveld op. cit p 89; Gregoriades op. cit p 49
103) Gregoriades op. cit p 49 and van Creveld op. cit p 88. In March 1941, a month before the German attack on Greece, Maniadakis had told an American journalist that he detested Russia more than the Axis. He and Constantine Kotzas, the Minister for Athens had widely manifested their admiration for Nazism. The journalists in Greece had to be reminded by the censors that Greece was fighting against Italy and not against Fascism. Seferis George, *Cheirografo tou Septemvriou 1941* (1972) pp 51-52 and National Archives and Record Service, USA 868.002/261, C.L. Sulzberger, memorandum of interview on 6 Mar. 1941 cited in Close op. cit p 54
104) van Creveld op. cit p 90
105) ibid p 90
107) FO 371/24922 Memorandum “Possibility of Greece Making a Separate Peace” 14/12/40 PRO
108) FO 371/24922 Tel. No 1167 from London to Athens 21/12/40 PRO
109) FO 371/29844 “Greece’s Attitude towards Italy and Germany” 7/1/41 PRO
110) FO 371/24922 Minutes December 1940 PRO
111) FO 371/29844 “Greece’s Attitude towards Italy and Germany” 7/1/41 PRO; Koliopoulos op. cit p 191
112) FO 371/29815 Tel. No 1457 from Athens to London 31/12/40 PRO; Koliopoulos op. cit p 200
113) G.M.o.F.A. F 37 and Koliopoulos op. cit p 55, 188. On the British (Inteligence) Service report from Turkey, Pesmatzoglou’s name appears as “G. Pezmanzoglou of newspaper *Proia*”
114) Koliopoulos op. cit pp 55, 188
116) *Vema* 16/2/63 cited in Geramanis vol.II op.cit p 22; D.G.F.P. Series D vol.XII No 170 Tel. 286 The Legation in Greece to the Foreign Ministry 16/3/41
117) Papagos, *The Battle of Greece 1940-1941*, pp 312-313
118) Koliopoulos op.cit p 259 and van Creveld op.cit p 133
119) Gregoriades op.cit pp 48-49 and Geramanis vol.II op.cit p 23; D.G.F.P. Series D vol.XII No 180 Tel. 186 Memorandum by the State Secretary 18/3/41; van Creveld op.cit p 134
120) van Creveld op.cit p 134; D.G.F.P. Series D vol.XII No 179 Draft Telegram 18/3/41
121) Newspaper *Vema* 6/10/74 cited in Geramanis vol.II op.cit pp 23-24
123) Gregoriades op.cit p 49 and Geramanis vol.II op.cit p 26
124) Geramanis vol.II op.cit p 26
125) Gregoriades op.cit p 49; van Creveld op.cit pp 133-134
126) Gregoriades op.cit p 49
127) D.G.F.P. Series D vol.XI Editor's Note pp 929-930
References 1-117 (ch.4)

2) Woodward, op.cit p 22 and Koliopoulos op.cit p 133
3) FO 371/23782 C.O.S (39) 45 Meeting "Greek Cooperation" 22/9/39 and FO 371/24886 M.R. (40) 10 Report by the Allied Military Committee on "Allied Military Policy in the Balkans" 5/2/40 PRO
4) Woodward, op.cit p 23
6) Woodward, op.cit p 27
7) ibid pp 28-29
9) Butler Christopher, Grand Alliance (vol.II London, 1957) p 69
10) Papagos, The Battle of Greece 1940-1941, pp 58-71
12) Papagos, The Battle of Greece 1940-1941, pp 69-70
13) Kokkinos, The Two Wars, p 69
15) Papagos, The Battle of Greece 1940-1941, pp 71-72
16) ibid
18) FO 371/24915 Tel No. 244 from London to Athens 31/5/40 PRO
19) FO 371/24924 W.M. P (40) 164 "The Question of an Alliance with Greece" 21/5/40 PRO
20) FO 371/24924 C.O.S (40) S.P "The Role of Greece in the event of War in the Mediterranean" 20/5/40 PRO
489

21) ibid and FO 371/24924 Tel No. 214 from London to Athens 24/5/40 PRO
22) CAB 80/9 C.O.S. (40) 299 Minutes 18/4/40 PRO
23) FO 371/24890 C.O.S. (40) "Balkan Policy after the French Collapse" 28/6/40 PRO
24) ibid
25) Koliopoulos op. cit p 137
26) FO 371/24944 Allied Military Committee M.R. (40) 26 "Allied Military Action in the event of War with Italy" Annex 13/5/40 and ADM 199/800 31 "Message to Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean" 15/5/40 and FO 371/24944 Tel. for despatch to French Government and British Commanders-in-Chief Mediterranean and Middle East PRO and Cunningham op. cit p 230
27) Cunningham op. cit pp 230-233
28) G.S.A. Metaxas Papers F 40
29) Papagos, The Battle of Greece 1940-1941, p 71
30) Cruickshank, Greece 1940-1941, p 51
31) Air Staff (Papers) (AIR) 8/544 "Provision of Air Support for Greece" 28/10/40 PRO
32) CAB 65/15 W.M. (40) Minute 2 Confidential Annex 28/10/40 PRO
33) Connell John Wavell Scholar and Soldier. The Biography of one of the Great Allied Commanders of World War II (New York, 1964) p 277
34) FO 371/24919 Tel No.806 from London to Athens 31/10/40 PRO
36) AIR 8/544 Draft Tel. from War Office to British Military Mission Athens 9/11/40 PRO
37) CAB 65/16 W.M.(40) 281 Minute 1 Confidential Annex 1/11/40 PRO
38) CAB 65/16 W.M.(40) Minute 2 Confidential Annex 4/11/40 PRO
39) ibid
40) Buckley, Greece and Crete 1941, p 19 and Playfair vol. I op.cit p 230 and Koliopoulos op.cit p 177
41) Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941 vol.VIII op.cit pp 527, 532-535, 545, 547-548, 555, 557
43) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 625/Z
44) Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941 vol.VIII op.cit pp 856-857 and Koliopoulos op.cit pp 191-194
45) FO 371/24866 Oliver Hardy to Sir Orme Sergeant PRO and Koliopoulos op.cit pp 191-194
46) FO 371/24866 Minutes “Attitude of Greece towards Albania” 25/11/40 PRO and Koliopoulos op.cit pp 191-194
47) FO 371/24866 Minutes “Greco-Albanian Relations” 23/11/40 and 25/11/40 PRO and Koliopoulos op.cit pp 191-194
48) ibid. It seems that both the Special Operations Executive (S.O.E.) and the Secret Intelligence Service (S.I.S.) or Military Intelligence 6 (MI6) had been very active both in Albania and Greece before the latter’s occupation. As Richard Clogg writes as early as June 1940 a Greek doctor working for the S.O.E. Department D had been arrested from the Greek forces in Epirus carrying dynamite and intending to cross into Albania. Wavell was alarmed and in July informed Athens that nothing should be done to cause tension between Greeks and Italians. Another section, the MI(R) had attempted to contact General Emmanuel Mandaka in Crete, an opposer of the Metaxas regime, in order to discuss the possibility of a coup against the dictator in case he yielded to the Axis. The plan failed. In addition S.O.E. bought ammunition and light arms from the Greek powder factory Bodosaki-Athanasiadi which were theoretically intended for Middle East but in reality were gathered at the basement of the British Consulate in Athens. S.O.E. trained saboteurs (300-400) and equipped them with explosives, guns, wireless
etc. It is important to stress that all this activity was taking place before Greece was occupied by the Axis. S.O.E. refrained from informing the Greek Government about its action. First, because the former was afraid that in the case of the latter being overthrown and replaced by a pro-Axis government S.O.E. plans and men would be revealed. Secondly, because if S.O.E. informed the Greek Government of its extensive network and preparation for subversive action in Greece, that could undermine the fighting abilities of the Greek army since the Greeks would have taken for granted that their country would be occupied. 


49) FO 371/24866 Minutes “Albania” 18/9/40 PRO

50) FO 371/24868 Tel. No 1020 from Belgrade to London 29/11/40 PRO

51) FO 371/24867 Tel. No 1154 from London to Athens 20/12/40 and Wolff Robert Lee The Balkans in our Time (Cambridge, 1974) p 196

52) Wolff op.cit p 196 and Koliopoulos op.cit p 178 ft 2

53) FO 371/24867 Tels. No 1154 and 1406 from London to Athens 20/12/40 and from Athens to London 21/12/40 PRO and Koliopoulos op.cit p 194

54) AIR 24/1667 PRO. According to Robin Higham the number of sorties by R.A.F. planes in Greece was the following: 21 in November 1940, 7 in December, 5 in January 1941, 10 in February, 36 in March and 41 in April. The Wellingtons have made a total of 120 sorties in six months. Higham Robin and Veremis Thanos (ed.) Aspects of Greece. 1936-40. The Metaxas Dictatorship pp 54 and 61 ft 7. One of the first things that D’Albiac requested from Metaxas was the creation of new all-weather aerodromes. Two were selected. One in Agrinion, north of the Gulf of Corinth, and one in Araxos, north-west of Peloponnese. However, by the time Greece was occupied by the Axis none of the two was ready.
The Germans put Araxos into commission within days after their arrival, by using conscripted local labour.


56) FO 371/29818 Tel No.1456 from Athens to London 31/12/40 PRO and Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941, vol.VIII p 549

57) Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941, vol.VIII p 550

58) Cunningham op.cit pp 284-286 and Phokas op.cit p 117

59) AIR 8/505 Tel. from British Military Mission Athens to War Office 17/11/40 PRO and Phokas op.cit p 117

60) G.N.G.S./D.o.N.H. "Φ" 3B/"Θ"3 F 41 and "Φ" 3B/"Θ"2 F 1; Papagos op.cit p 388 and Phokas op.cit pp 114-116

61) FO 371/24916 Tels No.1154 and 1159 from Athens to London 17/11/40 and 18/11/40 PRO

62) FO 371/24916 Tel No.1155 from Athens to London 17/11/40 PRO

63) FO 371/24921 Tel No.1197 from Athens to London 24/11/40 PRO

64) WO 201/2727 PRO and Buckley, Greece and Crete 1941, p 16


66) FO 371/24916 Tel No.1155 from Athens to London 18/11/40 PRO

67) AIR 8/532 Translation of despatch by H.E Monsieur Alexander Coryzis, President of the Council of Ministers to the Greek Minister in London. PRO


69) FO 371/24920 Tel No.1090 from Athens to London 7/11/40 PRO

70) Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941, vol.VIII pp 536-537

71) FO 371/24913 Tel No.1359 from Athens to London 17/12/40 PRO
72) FO 371/24921 Memorandum. "Attitude of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Turkey to the Greco-Italian War and possible German Intervention" 21/11/40 PRO
73) Premier (PREM) 3/309/1 Tel No.90494 from Churchill to Wavell 22/11/40 PRO
75) FO 371/24892 "Possible Action by Germany to support the Italian Attack on Greece". 27/11/40 PRO
76) ibid
77) ibid
78) PREM 3/309/1 Copy Tel. No.95942 from War Office to Commander-in-Chief Middle East 7/1/41 PRO
79) Connell op.cit pp 310-311 and Koliopoulos op.cit p 205
81) PREM 3/309/1 Copy Tel No.96572 from War Office to Commander-in-Chief Middle East 11/1/41 PRO and Churchill vol.III op.cit pp 16-17 and Koliopoulos op.cit p 205
82) PREM 3/309/1 Copy Tel. from the Admiralty to the Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean 10/1/41 PRO and Connell op.cit pp 310-311
83) PREM 3/309/1 Copy Tel No.P26 from the Commander-in-Chief Middle East to War Office 15/1/41 PRO and Cartie vol. III op.cit p 12
84) PREM 3/309/1 Copy Tel No.A92 from Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief Middle East to Air Ministry 15/1/41 PRO
85) G.M.o.F.A. F 12
86) ibid
87) ibid and Playfair vol.I op.cit p 341
89) G.M.o.F.A. F 12 and PREM 3/309/1 Copy Tel No.P26 from Commander-in-Chief Middle East to War Office 15/1/41 PRO
90) Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941 vol.VIII p 559
91) PREM 3/309/1 Copy Tel No.P26 from Commander-in-Chief Middle East to War Office 15/1/41 PRO
92) Papagos, The Battle of Greece 1940-1941, pp 315-316
93) ibid pp 395-398
94) Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941 vol.VIII pp 560-561
95) Connell op.cit p 315
96) Richards op.cit p 274
97) PREM 3/309/1 Copy Tel No.P45 from British Military Mission Athens to Commander-in-Chief Middle East 4/2/41 PRO
98) G.M.o.F.A. F 12. Mark Dragoumis claims that Koryzis was indecisive from the start and defeatist. He seemed to act more like a commentator, weighting the pros and cons of an action (the British offer) to be taken by others, than a politician who had to take serious decisions. Dragoumis, Greece at War 1940-1945 pp 37-38
99) Connell op.cit p 328
100) Churchill vol.III op.cit pp 58-59
101) WO 201/52 Memorandum on Conversations with General Papagos 13/2/41 PRO
102) CAB 105/2 Copy Tel No.P59 from British Military Mission Athens to Commander-in-Chief Middle East 20/2/41 PRO and Papagos op.cit pp 319-320
103) WO 201/52 Memorandum on Conversations with General Papagos 13/2/41 PRO
104) PREM 3/209 Copy Tel. of Chiefs of Staff to Commander-in-Chief Middle East 11/2/41 PRO
105) Weber op.cit pp 99-100
106) Woodward op.cit pp 524-525
107) Weber op.cit p 96
108) Bragadin op.cit p 80 and Cunningham op.cit p 316
109) Bragadin op. cit p 80
110) Cunningham op. cit p 306
111) AIR 8/914 Assistance to the Greeks 10/2/41 PRO and Richards op. cit p 284
112) FO 371/29798 Tel No.124 from Ankara to London 20/1/41 PRO and G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 611/B/44
113) CAB 66/15 Copy Tel No.467 from Prime Minister to Eden 21/2/41 PRO
115) CAB 66/15 Copy Tel No.355 from Cairo to London 21/2/41 PRO and Eden op. cit p 228 and Churchill vol. III op. cit pp 64-65
116) ibid
117) Hinsley, Thomas, Ransom, Knight op. cit p 359
References 1-83 (Ch.5)

1) Lewin, The Chief, p 98
2) FO 371/33145 and WO 201/2731 PRO; Eden op.cit pp 230-234 and Playfair vol.I op.cit p 379 and Butler, Grand Strategy vol.II pp 441-442. In WO 201/2731 at the entry 22 February 1941 there is the following hand-written text: "The proposals of General Papagos appeared to offer a reasonable prospect of establishing an effective defence against German aggression in the north-east of Greece. It was recognized that our chief dangers would come from our inferiority in the air, the uncertainty of the Yugoslav attitude, and the dangers to our shipping in the narrow waters of the Aegean. It was considered, however, that the importance of bringing timely assistance to Greece was such that these risks were acceptable. The conference agreed to the proposals of General Papagos; and it was understood that he would at once begin the withdrawal of troops from Macedonia to the Aliakhmon Line." This text which is at the entry 22/2/41 is hand-written, as if it has been added, since the previous text is typed.
3) De Guingand, Operation Victory, pp 57-58
4) Papagos, The Battle of Greece 1940-1941, pp 318-320
5) G.M.o.F.A. F 12 and Papagos, The Battle of Greece 1940-1941, p 320
6) ibid
7) G.M.o.F.A. F 12 and WO 201/2731 PRO
8) ibid
9) G.M.o.F.A. F 12
10) CAB 66/15 Copy Tel No.262 from Athens to London 23/2/41 PRO
11) FO 371/33145 PRO
12) ibid and Higham Robin and Veremis Thanos (ed.) Aspects of Greece 1936-40. The Metaxas Dictatorship p 57
13) G.M.o.F.A. F 24 Tel from Sofia to Athens 28/2/41 and Tels No. 6518, 42 and 227 from Sofia to Athens 22/2/41, 20/2/41 and 5/3/41
The basic British relevant files on the Anglo-Greek talks in February and March 1941 are: FO 371/33145 and WO 201/2731 and 2734.
The Greek relevant file on the Anglo-Greek talks in February and March 1941 is: G.M.o.F.A. F 12. In WO 201/2731 at the entry 2nd March 1941 there is the following hand-written text: "They [the British] found to their dismay that General Papagos had changed his attitude. He had not, apparently for political reasons, ordered the withdrawal of the troops in Macedonia to the Aliakmon Line and he now declared this to be impossible in view of the German entry into Bulgaria, since the troops might be attacked while in process of withdrawal. He also stated that any withdrawal of reserves from Albania was impossible. He now proposed that the British contingent should land at Salonika and be sent to hold the advanced line in Macedonia which he had agreed at the previous conference was strategically unsound." This text which appears at the entry 2/3/41 is hand-written as if it had been added, since the previous text is typed.
16) G.M.o.F.A. F 12 and FO 371/33145
17) ibid 1940-41 *Ellinika Diplomatika Enagrafa* op.cit Nos.151, 152 pp 120-133, 136-146
18) FO 371/33145 and WO 201/2731 PRO and G.M.o.F.A. F12; Eden, *The Reckoning* pp 243-245
20) FO 371/33145 PRO


23) Koliopoulos op.cit p 213 ft 1 and *Metaxas. To Imerologio tou 1933-1941*, vol.VIII pp 559-560, 562


26) CAB 105/2 Copy Tel No.P 59 from British Military Mission Athens, to Commander-in-Chief Middle East 20/2/41 PRO

27) *Diethnes Simbosio gia ta 50 Hronia apo to Epos 1940-41* (Salonika, 1991) pp 42-47. Robin Higham writes that Heywood spoke Greek and that Wavell did not trust him because while he was a Military Attaché in Paris in the mid-thirties, he had inaccurately reported the state of the French army. Higham Robin and Veremis Thanos (ed.) *Aspects of Greece 1936-40. The Metaxas Dictatorship* pp 51-52. If Higham is right and Heywood spoke Greek, then it is more difficult to comprehend how could he have misunderstood Papagos?. If he was able to speak to Papagos in his mother tongue and the barrier of the language was not there, then Heywood should have grasped the importance of Yugoslavia right away, and if not, he still could have clarified that with Papagos between 22nd February-2nd March 1941.


29) G.M.o.F.A. 1940-41 *Ellinika Diplomatika Engrafa Nos.128 T6852 and 137 T1574

30) FO 371/33145 and WO 201/2731 and WO 201/50 PRO

31) ibid
33) Lewin, *The Chief*, p 104 and Cunningham op.cit p 315 and ibid p 121
34) Churchill vol.III op.cit p 90
35) CAB 105/2 Copy Tel No.327 from Athens to Cairo 6/3/41 PRO. According to Higham, Palairbet constantly pleaded Greece’s case with London, so that he had to be reminded who he represented. By spring 1941 Palairbet had become *persona non grata* at the F.O. Higham Robin and Veremis Thanos (ed.) *Aspects of Greece 1936-40. The Metaxas Dictatorship* pp 229-230
36) CAB 105/2 Copy Tels No.330 and 332 from Athens to Cairo 6/3/41 PRO
37) CAB 105/2 Copy Tel No.455 from Cairo to London 6/3/41 PRO
38) Churchill vol. VIII op.cit pp 92-93
39) CAB 105/2 Copy Tel No.463 from Cairo to London 7/3/41 PRO
41) FO 371/33145 PRO and Woodward op.cit p 540
42) ibid
43) PREM 309/2 Copy Tel No.722 from Prime Minister to Eden 14/3/41 PRO
44) FO 371/33145 PRO
45) G.M.o.F.A. F 12 Tel No.1401 from Belgrade to Athens 23/3/41
48) Churchill vol.VIII op.cit 142
49) ibid pp 148-150
50) Hinsley, Thomas, Ransom, Knight op.cit p 370
51) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 628/A/1
52) G.M.o.F.A. F 12 and *1940-41 Ellinika Diplomatika Engrafa*, No.197 and FO 371/33145 PRO
53) ibid
54) FO 371/33145 PRO
55) ibid and Woodward op.cit p 544
58) ibid
59) ibid
60) CAB 105/3 Copy Tel No.991 from Prime Minister to Wavell 4/4/41 PRO
61) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 625/A/46 and 625/G/1
63) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 625/Z
64) Playfair vol. II op.cit p 79
65) Admiralty (ADM) 186/795 PRO and Bragadin op.cit pp 83-85
66) ibid and ADM 199/781 PRO and Cunningham op.cit pp 335-337. After the battle of Matapan a joke was created by sailors in Alexandria: "Greeks sailors like ouzo, British sailors prefer whisky but the Italians stick to port". Dragoumis, *Greece at War 1940-1945* p 32
68) ADM 199/781 and 186/795 PRO The British relevant files on the Battle of Matapan are: ADM 199/781 and 186/795 PRO. In addition see Cunningham's report to the Admiralty, in November 1941, published in London Gazette 31st July 1947.
69) Phokas op.cit pp 325-334
70) ibid pp 334-335
71) G.N.G.S./D.o.N.H. "Φ" 3A/"Θ"2 F 13 a+b and Phokas op.cit pp 334-335

The relevant Greek files on the Battle of Matapan are: G.N.G.S./D.o.N.H. "Φ" 3A/"Θ"2 F 13 a+b and "Φ" 3A/"Θ"1 F 1-3

72) Cunningham op.cit p 334

73) ADM 186/795 PRO


75) ADM 199/781 and 186/795 PRO

76) G.N.G.S./D.o.N.H. "Φ"3A/"Θ"1 F 1-3 and interview with Stylianos Haratsis on 14/3/94 and Haratsis I. Stylianos 1023 Axiomatiki and 22 Kinimata (vol.1 Athens, 1985) p 346

77) Phokas op.cit p 327

78) Beevor op.cit p 31 and Playfair vol.II op.cit p 79 and Higham Robin and Veremis Thanos (ed.) Aspects of Greece 1936-40. The Metaxas Dictatorship pp 34, 56, 59, 230. During the War Cabinet meeting in London on 7th November 1940, Churchill was concerned with the Germans monitoring British activities in Crete. He requested that they were disposed of by an "accident" to which Halifax very rightly replied that 35 "accidents" would hardly look "accidental." Dragoumis op.cit p 30. On the contrary, the American and Yugoslav Ambassadors to Athens agreed that the Greek police was capable of catching enemy spies and curtailing enemy espionage. Iatrides John (ed.) Ambassador MacVeagh Reports: Greece, 1933-1947 p 278 and Higham Robin and Veremis Thanos (ed.) Aspects of Greece 1936-40. The Metaxas Dictatorship p 27

79) Linardatos, O Polemos tou 1940-41 kai 1 Mahi tis Kritis, vol.II pp 142-148


Two examples which show the magnitude of Greek Germanophilia are the following: a) in April 1943, Prince Peter, cousin of George II, submitted a memorandum to the British stating that the Greeks had resisted the German attack on Greece with less determination than the Italian attack; firstly because the Germans were stronger than the Italians, and secondly, because the Germans were not despised such as the Italians were. A great segment of the population — especially the wealthy classes — sympathized with the Germans. Half of the Greek professors of the University and 4/5 of the Polytechnio ones, had studied in Germany. FO 371/37216: R3924 cited in Fleischer, Stemma kai Svastika. I Ellada tis Katohis kai tis Antistasis. 1941-1944 vol.1 pp 117-118 fts 6 and 7. b) According to Stephen J. Lee the Greek police headquarters displayed pictures of Goebbels and Hitler. Lee Stephen J., The European Dictatorships 1918-1945 p 290
References 1-76 (Ch. 6)

1) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 761/K/1
3) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 761/K/1
4) ibid F 662/"ΣΤ"/1
5) ibid F 662/"Τ"/1
7) G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 662/"Τ"/1
8) ibid Fs 761/K/1 and 761
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70) ibid
71) Interview with Mr. Leonidas Papagos on 4/4/94 and G.A.G.S./D.o.A.H. F 634/Z/1 and WO 201/2740 PRO and Korantis op.cit pp 293-296
72) ibid F 634/Z/1
73) Papagos, *The Battle of Greece 1940-1941*, pp 405-406. It seems that neither Mazarakis nor anyone else wanted to become Premier with Minister of Public Safety and Order, Maniadakis in the Cabinet. The British insisted on his participation in the Cabinet for reasons of security. Iatrides John (ed.) *Ambassador MacVeagh Reports: Greece, 1933-1947* pp 342-343 and FO 371/29819 Tel. No 769 from Athens to London 20/4/41 PRO. As Richard Clogg writes, the S.O.E. had attempted by complex and unsuccessful machinations to impose Mazarakis as the next Premier after Koryzis suicide. These acts had as a result, the creation of hostility from Tsouderos towards S.O.E. *I Ellada stin Decaetia 1940-1950. Ena Ethnos se Krisi* op.cit pp 190-191
74) FO 371/29819 Serial No.M 457/1 from Prime Minister to Foreign Secretary 20/4/41 and CAB 105/3 Copy Tel No. 868 from London to Athens 21/4/41 PRO
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77) Burdick Charles and Jacobsen Hans-Adolf (ed.), *The Halder War Diary 1939-1942*, pp 371-372 It seems that certain German units did not allow the Italians to attack the Greeks once the Greco-German armistice was signed. The *Duce* was upset. Cervi op.cit pp 291-292 and Muggeridge Malcolm (ed.) *Ciano’s Diary 1939-1943* p 334
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104) Connell op.cit p 420
106) PREM 3/206/2 PRO and ibid

108) Butler op.cit p 447


110) FO 371/29820 Tel No.778 from Athens to London 21/4/41 PRO

111) Buckley, *Greece and Crete 1941*, p 102

112) Savage's narrative cited in Long op.cit pp 91-92 and Long op.cit p 92

113) Gould Lee op.cit p 86

114) Koliopoulos op.cit 291. Kovacs claims that Tsolakoglou had been twice dismissed from the Greek army in the past, once during the Balkan wars for a "commercial affair" and later on during the Greco-Turkish War of 1922 for desertion. Kovacs claims that the Greek Government had been aware of Tsolakoglou's numerous visits to the German embassy in Athens, but had neglected to stop him. Kovacs op.cit p 62. Also, his name appears in a British (Intelligence) Service report from Turkey as a Germanophile. G.M.o.F.A. F 37

115) Geramanis vol.II op.cit pp 93-94 and Long op.cit p 92


117) Geramanis vol.II op.cit p 94-101

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