Chapter Five

GREECE (1942-1944)

by D. M. Condit

This is one of fifty-seven chapters in a three volume series, Challenge and Response in Internal Conflict. The series was compiled under contract to the Department of the Army by the Center for Research in Social Systems (CRESS) of the American University.
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The German occupiers of Greece, aided by their Italian and Bulgarian satellites and a Greek puppet government, successfully employed military operations and terrorization techniques to contain, if not destroy, the Allied-supported Greek resistance groups that sprang up during World War II.

BACKGROUND

The guerrilla warfare that occurred in Greece during World War II was internally dominated by the issue of communism and took on many of the dimensions of the cold war that later developed between the nations of the West and those under communism. At the time, however, with the Soviet Union allied with the Western Powers in the most devastating war of this century, only a few took note. Ironically, although the Axis Powers were ideologically and militarily committed to the destruction of communism, their counterinsurgent tactics were such that, in the end, they fostered the growth of the Greek Communist forces.

The setting for these events was a small country strategically located on the northeastern fringe of the Mediterranean. Bounded by Albania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Turkey to the north, Greece dominated the Ionian Sea on the west and the Aegean on the east and looked out upon the Mediterranean to the south. From Roman times, control of Greece had been essential to those who would command the eastern Mediterranean area; in modern times, a cornerstone of British policy had been to ensure that the country did not fall into unfriendly hands. In World War II, German plans were to challenge this policy.

Its strategic location and its natural beauty notwithstanding, the land itself was economically unproductive. Of Greece's 50,000 square miles—an area about the size of New York State—more than half is mountainous, a quarter suitable for forest or pasturage, and only a fifth arable. Although grains were a major agricultural product, prewar Greece was forced to import about 40 percent of her needs. Because her other crops, such as tobacco, olives, currants, and other fruits, were those for which demand was elastic, the country was vulnerable to shifts in the world market.
More industrialized than other Balkan countries, prewar Greece nevertheless had to import approximately a third of her manufactured goods. Income from the Greek merchant marine traditionally provided the means to pay for imports. By either Western European or North American standards, the Greek standard of living was low.

The Transportation Network

Because the road and rail network in Greece was rudimentary, it was of extreme importance from a military point of view. There were only 1,700 miles of railroad, and only one north-south rail line connecting Greece with Europe. This single-track, standard-gauge line came through Yugoslavia to Salonika, then followed the eastern coast of Greece down to Athens and its port of Piraeus. Supplies destined for the Peloponnesus, that part of Greece lying south of the Gulf of Corinth, had to be reloaded at this point onto cars suitable for the meter-gauge tracks of that area. From Piraeus, supplies could also be shipped to the Greek island of Crete and thence to North Africa.

Many Greek roads were fit only for carts or foot traffic, more trails than roads in the modern sense; only a few were paved and suitable for vehicular traffic. One major road roughly paralleled the rail line from Salonika to Athens in eastern Greece. In western Greece, one north-south road connected the cities of Ioannina, Arta, and Agrinion, then turned east to Athens. Across northern Greece, only one major road, leading from Ioannina to Trikkala to Larisa, connected with the Salonika-Athens highway. The transportation system—so limited in extent and traversing such difficult terrain—was to offer an extremely vulnerable target for guerrilla warfare.

Social and Political Conditions on the Eve of War

The Greek people—numbering about 7,300,000 at the outbreak of World War II, or fewer than the present population of New York City—had both high birth and high death rates. In 1928, when the last prewar census was taken, over 40 percent of the people could neither read nor write, and the educational system beyond the elementary grades was open to few. Population exchanges with Turkey in the 1920's had made the Greek population quite homogeneous: 96 percent spoke Greek and 97 percent were of the Eastern Orthodox faith. Ethnic minorities—the Jews, Turks, Chams, Vlachs, and Slavophone Greeks—constituted less than 5 percent of the population.

Outside the cities and major villages, Greek life on the mainland was frequently circumscribed by the mountain environment and its concomitants of poverty, insularity, and suspicion of strangers. Strongly religious, the village Greeks projected an emotional faith into their daily lives. And underlying all of these qualities in the mountain areas, where the guerrilla war was to play such an important role, was an element of primitivism—a stoic acceptance of the sad accidents of fate, as well as an acceptance of the need to become at times the instrument of fate.
even through the use of violence. Greece had a tradition of both individual and national resistance, glorified in the fight against Turkish oppression in the 19th century and lingering on in the custom of vendetta or private vengeance that persisted in many mountain and island communities.

Though few miles separated them, Greeks in the mountains lived under very different circumstances from those in the cities, particularly Athens, the capital and the center of the country's intellectual and political life. In Athens, the game was politics, characterized by its players' quick perception, sophistication, and individuality of reaction. Political parties were formed, changed, reorganized, and reconstituted in a constant flux.

In the years between the two World Wars, Greece had undergone a period of great instability which had been overcome only with loss of democratic liberty. In 1935 the Greek monarchy, which had been suspended for a number of years, was restored when King George II returned to the throne; a year later he acceded to a dictatorship under Gen. Ioannis Metaxas. To achieve economic gains and political stability, Metaxas repressed political parties. During these years before World War II, the Communist Party of Greece (Kommunistikon Komma Ellados—KKE), whose secretary general Nikos Zachariades was imprisoned, went underground into clandestine activity, an experience that was later to serve it well. The parties of the center, on the other hand, generally declined during the Metaxas period.

**Mussolini's Italian Invasion Is Turned Back**

Political events in Greece soon became subordinate to military developments. In the spring of 1939, the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, Axis partner of the Germans, invaded Albania and was soon bogged down in a major campaign in that mountainous and forbidding country. He therefore decided that he would extend the war into Greece unless Metaxas allowed Italian troops to use that country as necessary. Although he was believed to be pro-German, Metaxas,* backed by the King, rejected the Italian ultimatum of October 28, 1940, with its three-hour deadline, and called the Greeks to arms.

The Greeks responded in a burst of heroism, and by the end of the year the Italian Eleventh Army had been driven out of Greece and 30 miles back into Albania. By February 1941, the Italians were fighting a desperate battle, but the Greek attack had run out of supplies and steam. As it became apparent that the Germans would come to the rescue of the Italians, the British, who had already sent a small force into Greece, pulled more troops out of their North African campaign in order to buttress Balkan resistance and fulfill their treaty obligation to defend the territorial integrity of Greece.

* General Metaxas died in January 1941 at the height of Greek success and his own popularity.
German Forces Invade and Conquer Greece

To the German dictator Adolf Hitler, the 1941 situation in the Balkans presented an intolerable threat to his plans for a future major eastern offensive against his ostensible ally, the U.S.S.R. The Balkans, including the nonacquiescent countries of Yugoslavia, Albania, and Greece, constituted the southern flank of this forthcoming theater of war; and Hitler felt that unless he secured it the success of his Russian campaign would be jeopardized. The Balkans also constituted a supply route, a staging area, and air bases for the North African theater, where German forces were already engaged in a duel with British armies for control of the Middle East.

On April 6, 1941, German armies attacked through the Balkans with 27 divisions. Eleven days later, Yugoslavia capitulated; and on the 23rd, Greek forces surrendered. The main British force and some Greek troops, as well as the Greek monarch and government, were able, however, to withdraw to Crete; and the battle continued there until the end of May, thus upsetting the German timetable. By then the British navy had effected an evacuation, and the Greek King and government had been safely withdrawn to Africa. But all of Greece, including Crete and the myriad other Greek islands, was in Axis hands.

Greece Is Occupied by Three Axis Nations

German plans for the occupation of Greece were predicated upon their desire to disengage as soon as possible, to send their troops into the invasion of Russia, scheduled to occur on June 21, 1941. The Germans expected no trouble in Greece; and that country, being neither Jewish nor Slavic, was not marked for "special" treatment. Hitler himself paid public homage to the Greek cultural tradition. The Greek army was paroled and sent home, in a move intended both to obviate the need to shelter, clothe, and feed a large number of prisoners of war and to establish rapport with the Greeks by indicating respect for their show of valor.

The Germans maintained direct control in only four areas: two areas in northeastern Greece (that around Salonika, and the mainland area and certain Aegean islands bordering neutral Turkey); a small area in central Greece, including the port of Piraeus; and most of the island of Crete. The Italians, only lately roundly defeated by the Greeks, were allowed to occupy the largest share of mainland Greece, including Athens and the Peloponnesus, as well as eastern Crete and various other islands. And the Bulgarians, traditionally feared and hated by the Greeks, were assigned two islands and an adjacent mainland area in northern Greece.

To administer most of the mainland area, a Greek puppet government was set up—subservient to the Axis, and particularly to the Germans. Under the succeeding prime ministerships of the general Georgios Tsolakoglou, the gynecologist Constantinos Logothetopoulos, and the politician Ioannis Rallis, this government was simultaneously weak, inadequate, and generally ineffective. Many civil servants refused to serve under it, and many who did serve apparently engaged in slowdowns.
Occupation Policies Create Great Hardship

The first year of the occupation indicated what life under the Axis would be like. In Crete, the Germans took reprisals for the active part that the people had played in the earlier battle for the island. Italy planned to annex the Ionian Islands. Bulgaria annexed and began to colonize her mainland zone of occupation, most of which was farming land; during the first year, 100,000 Greeks were driven out of western Thrace and those who remained faced extreme economic duress.

Conditions were appalling, particularly in urban areas. The food supply, insufficient to feed even the Greeks, was used for Axis troops and civilians. In the winter of 1941-42, the people in and around Athens suffered severely from cold and hunger. The fuel supply gave out, the bread ration was cut to about a quarter of normal intake, and on some days even this amount was not available. Half a million people were reduced to depending entirely on soup kitchens. Unemployment was considerable; and within two years inflation drove prices up to a thousand times the prewar level, while wages rose but a hundredfold. On the black market, the only place many basic supplies could be obtained, prices were beyond the reach of most Greeks. Each morning during that winter the puppet government sent out carts to collect the bodies of those who had died in the streets during the night. The young, the old, and the homeless were the first to die. A German source estimated that infant mortality rose from 6 to 50 percent.

Quite unintentionally, the Axis created conditions that were to aid in the growth of an insurgency against itself. Greek manpower had been returned to Greece. occupation policies had engendered instability and discontent, and Greek pride had been irreparably offended by the presence of Bulgarians and Italians as occupiers.

INSURGENCY

Active insurgency did not start immediately upon the victory of German arms in Greece. The first months following the Greek defeat may be termed a period of psychological adjustment to the misfortunes of war, the appearance of a trilateral foreign occupation, and the slowly dawning awareness of the exact meaning of these fateful adversities. Of course, some evidence of anti-Axis sentiment appeared almost immediately after the occupation began: foreign flags were pulled down, British soldiers were helped, foreign broadcasts were listened to, and rumors and stories floated around. But such incidents as occurred were on the whole trivial.

The Beginnings of Organized Resistance: EKKA

In the summer of 1941, however, there began to be formed a number of resistance organizations, mainly in Athens and in other large cities. Of these, three became militarily and politically significant during the war as active guerrilla organizations operating in mainland Greece—EKKA, EDES, and EAM/ELAS.
The first to be organized was EKKA (Ethniki kai Koinoniki Apeleftherosis, National and Social Liberation), formed in July 1941 and representing the political center. Militarily, it was opposed to the occupation; politically, it was against either a monarchical or a Communist government in postwar Greece. Its best known leader was Col. Dimitrios Psaros, who in March 1943, led a guerrilla band into the mountains. Unfortunately for Psaros, he came into conflict with Communist guerrillas who twice fought and nearly destroyed his band in 1943 and finally, in April 1944, crushed his third attempt to create a guerrilla force, at which time Psaros himself was captured and killed. Although EKKA left a political heritage in Athens, it played no further military role.

**EDES Guerrillas Under Napoleon Zervas**

The second group, EDES (Ellinikos Dimokratikos Ethnikos Syndesmos, Greek Democratic National League), was also organized in Athens in the late summer of 1941 to oppose the occupation authorities. EDES originally stood for restoration of a measure of republicanism in postwar Greece through such means as a democratic constitution and a plebiscite on the question of the monarchy. By mid-1942, the group was able to field a small guerrilla force of about 150 men under Col. Napoleon Zervas, an officer who had been ousted from the Greek regular army for political activities in the 1930's and had not been allowed to fight in 1940-41.

Zervas, whose reputation in Athens was that of a sport and a gambler, created a new career for himself in the mountains of Greece. Rotund, warm and jolly in appearance and manner, and respected by most of his men and officers, he was particularly admired by the Allied officers who worked with him. Zervas eventually built up a highly centralized organization over which he maintained personal control; at the same time, he also seemed to have a good grasp of the guerrilla tactics his forces had to employ if they were to survive.

**Organization of the Communist Resistance Movement**

By far the most powerful resistance group in wartime Greece was the Communist-dominated EAM/ELAS. EAM (Ethnikon Apeleftherotikon Metopon, National Liberation Front) was the political front; ELAS (Ethnikos Laikos Apeleftherotikis Stratos, National People's Liberation Army) was formed somewhat later. Although EAM was nominally composed of five parties, the controlling group was the Communist Party of Greece (KKE). Two of the other member parties were considered to be KKE satellites; only the remaining two, the Socialist Party of Greece and the Popular Democratic Union, were truly independent. EAM's objectives—resistance to the occupiers and a postwar government based on the people's will as expressed in free elections—were expressed in the most generic and attractive terms. Although the aims thus stated were almost

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*Sometimes transformed to "Republican" to avoid any connotation of Communist connection.
universally acceptable in wartime Greece, their actions indicated other unstated objectives: resis­tance to the occupiers would be allowed only through EAM and its affiliates, and free expression of the people's will would inevitably lead to making postwar Greece a Communist state.

EAM had a central committee whose members represented occupational groups, urban centers, and rural communities, as well as the five parties. Although the KKE, like the other parties, held only one seat on the central committee, it dominated both the committee and EAM through its control of workers' organizations, urban neighborhood groups, and rural community organizations. A whole series of organizations, best known by their initials, were controlled by EAM. In villages, EA was set up to do relief work; ETA, for tax collection; EPON, for organizing youths; and a local EAM committee, for overseeing and interpreting EAM wishes. EEAM, the Workers' National Liberation Front, was the principal EAM-controlled urban organization. A terrorist and disciplinary organization, OPLA, carried out secret EAM assignments. EAM is estimated to have involved from 500,000 to 700,000 Greeks in one or another of its organizations during the war; EAM itself claimed that in late 1944, at the height of its strength, its enrollment in all subsidiaries reached 1,500,000.2

**Early Operations Under EAM**

In 1941 and 1942 EAM's efforts were directed primarily at perfecting its organizational structure. Through its labor organization, it supported, with some success, a number of small-scale strikes and demonstrations.

Although EAM was not to organize its guerrilla army of ELAS until the end of 1942, by that autumn it did control a number of small guerrilla bands under the direction of Aris Veloukhiotis (born Athanasios Klaras and generally known as Aris), who was himself a Communist under EAM discipline. Dark-bearded, short, dour, and silent, Aris was known to be a practicing homosexual and pederast, both cruel and brave, a severe disciplinarian. One of the most remarkable men of the Greek resistance, he was later described by a British officer who knew him well as "an intelligent, able man with no heart, without human pity, an excellent psychologist, a fanatic leader of men."3

**Introduction of British Forces Into Greece**

Thus by the fall of 1942, there were many Greek resistance organizations, but of the three that carried a major political thrust, only EDES and EAM had any guerrilla forces in the field, and these forces were just getting started. This situation was to be rendered immensely more complex by the events of that fall, which introduced a British Military Mission (BMM) onto the Greek scene.

In September 1942, Allied forces and fortunes were still at a low ebb, while German victories were at their height. Of the European countries, only Great Britain and Russia were
actively engaging Axis armies, the latter in a life-and-death struggle on her own soil. In Africa, the German forces of Gen. Erwin Rommel had recaptured Tobruk and advanced to the El Alamein line, within 70 miles of Alexandria. British forces had yet to make a breakout attempt from El Alamein, and it was important to this effort to cut Rommel's main supply line, which ran north through Crete and Greece to Yugoslavia and thus to central Europe.

Since Allied airpower was insufficient to interdict this line, the British turned to a desperate expedient. They decided to send in a coup de main party of twelve men who would seek the aid of the Greek guerrillas under Zervas, about whom they knew, and hit the supply line at one of its weakest points—any one of three main bridges carrying the only north-south railroad through Greece. The party was dropped into Greece in late September; it made contact with the guerrillas under both Zervas and Aris, and, with their joint cooperation, successfully sabotaged the Gorgopotamos bridge in November 1942, putting the rail line out of order for six weeks.

**Allies Decide To Support the Greek Guerrillas on a Permanent Basis**

In a rapid change of plans, the Special Operations Executive (SOE), the British agency responsible for the Gorgopotamos party, decided not to exfiltrate it as planned but to leave it in Greece to "volunteer" to work with the Greek guerrillas. The twelve members of the original party then became liaison officers with the guerrillas. These twelve were soon augmented and Greece was divided into four main areas, each under a senior liaison officer. By the summer of 1943, British strength had reached some 30 to 40 men, and was probably over 100 by the next summer. These men were commanded by Brig. E. C. W. Myers until the summer of 1943 and after that by Lt. Col. (later Col.) Christopher Montague Woodhouse; both commanders had been in the original Gorgopotamos party.

In the fall of 1943 the BMM to the Greek guerrillas was converted into the Allied Military Mission (AMM) by the addition of a U.S. component. After recalling one American officer, the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS), in December, airdropped Maj. Gerald K. Wines, a man highly compatible with Woodhouse, to head the American component of the mission. Although Allied in name and personnel, the mission was dominated by the British, whose interests in Greece were recognized as paramount. The United States had fewer liaison officers in Greece than the British and, in general, they echoed British policy.

Along with men came supplies and money for the Greek guerrillas. The long air trip, poor weather conditions, and lack of aircraft originally limited the amount of supplies that were sent; later the issue of communism and the use of supplies as a lever for controlling guerrilla behavior also held down the amounts. A total of 2,514 tons of supplies was dropped to the Greek guerrillas by Allied planes, in 1,040 successful sorties (78 percent of the total number). Some supplies were also brought in by ship after the guerrillas were able to acquire and hold a navigable port on the west coast of the mainland. Gold sovereigns were given to the guerrillas to
help defray the cost of supporting active members and to sustain destitute and homeless Greeks in the area; extremely rough, and possibly low, estimates indicate that this cost amounted to several million dollars.

Before the end of 1942, the situation in Greece began to appear somewhat less dismal than before to the guerrillas. The British breakout from El Alamein in October and the failing German drive at Stalingrad had changed the fortunes of the war; the final outcome, previously much in doubt, now seemed more hopeful for the Allies. Furthermore, within Greece, the success at Gorgopotamos, the presence of the British mission, and the tangible evidence of forthcoming external support made it psychologically and economically feasible for the guerrilla bands to grow.

**Communists Form a Guerrilla Army, ELAS**

The Communists in EAM were quick to take advantage of the opportunity. In December 1942, just after Gorgopotamos, EAM organized its National People's Liberation Army (Ethnikos Laikos Apeleutherotikos Stratos), whose Greek initials of ELAS approximated the Greek word for the country, Ellas. Interestingly enough, EAM did not choose the redoubtable Aris to command ELAS. Instead, it looked for a man of sufficient repute and distinction to be acceptable to non-Communist Greeks, particularly officers, whom EAM wished to attract into ELAS. Finally, in April 1943, it found in Col. Stephanos Saraphis the man to head its guerrilla army—an appointment the more remarkable because his small band of guerrillas had only weeks earlier been attacked and disbanded by Communists who had then led him in chains through village streets where people shouted "traitor" at him. Notwithstanding the past, Saraphis made a good military commander in the eyes of EAM/ELAS. Though not a Communist, he was so anti-British that he apparently preferred even Greek Communists to British-affiliated non-Communists. Organizing motley groups of guerrillas into something resembling a regular army* of approximately 4,000-man divisions, with technical services and training facilities, Saraphis formed an army better prepared to take over Greece than to take on the occupation armies.

**ELAS Is Organized so as To Maintain Communist Influence**

The growth of ELAS presented a problem to the Communists, whose numbers were small in relation to the movement they controlled and whose influence was being spread thin as the organizational structure multiplied. The regular army officers who followed Colonel Saraphis into ELAS were not Communists; moreover, the Communist aim was to draw all of the most respectable elements of Greek life into some aspect of EAM/ELAS activity. The Communists were in a sense taking the calculated risk of losing control over the resistance organization through the sheer weight of non-Communist adherents. Of necessity, therefore, the KKE had to devise ways

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*In addition, ELAS controlled a naval section, comprising mainly small vessels; this was formed in the winter of 1943-44 and was known as ELAN, the Greek People's Liberation Navy.
of manipulating both people and organizations so as to maximize Communist control with the use of a minimum number of Communists.

The Communists solved their problem by setting up a triumvirate command for the General Headquarters (GHQ) of ELAS. As the GHQ was organized in May 1943, Saraphis was in charge of military operations only; Aris was capetanios, responsible for such matters as unit morale, propaganda, recruitment, quartermaster duties, and relations with the civilian populace; and the Communist Andreas Tzimas, as representative of the EAM Central Committee, was political adviser and the most important figure in the GHQ. When Tzimas was posted to Tito’s partisan headquarters in Yugoslavia in the autumn of 1943, the acting secretary general of the KKE, Georgos Siantos, took over this post.

This triumvirate command structure persisted throughout EAM/ELAS echelons down to the tactical level, where the capetanios, almost always a Communist, performed the duties of a political adviser. In the spring of 1944, the post of political adviser was abolished, but the persons who had held the post usually remained in staff positions. The Communist-controlled political organization, EAM, always retained an element of direct authority over its military arm, ELAS.

Guerrilla Strengths and Areas Compared

EAM/ELAS guerrillas soon outstripped the forces of Zervas’ EDES, which had reached approximately 5,000 men by the summer of 1943. From a force of 5,000 men in the spring, ELAS grew to a claimed strength of almost 20,000 in the fall of that year. Furthermore, because it controlled a far larger area of Greece, it was recruiting at a far faster rate than EDES. The maximum strength of EDES, in the summer of 1944, was 10,000 to 12,000 men. EAM/ELAS at this point controlled an area more than four times the size of that of EDES. By spring of 1944, Saraphis estimated that ELAS had about 30,000 men organized into 10 divisions; this figure is believed to have reached 40,000 by the summer, possibly 50,000 by October.

Political Considerations Become Increasingly Important in Allied Councils

The growth of EAM/ELAS and the hard evidence of its Communist aims, particularly its constant attacks on other guerrilla bands, were not lost on the British. At the same time, however, Brigadier Myers felt that the immediate need to use EAM/ELAS for Allied military objectives outweighed, at least at that time, the political challenge EAM presented for the postwar period. In the spring of 1943, he sought to offset EAM/ELAS strength through a National Bands Agreement, which assigned specific areas in Greece to various guerrilla groups, all of whom

*See Chapter Eleven, "Yugoslavia (1941-1944)."
agreed to cooperate and to obey a Joint General Headquarters composed of representatives of all recognized guerrilla bands and of the British Middle East Command. This agreement, though signed by EAM/ELAS, EDES, EKKA, and the British, was soon sabotaged by EAM/ELAS. However, possibly because of Myers' threats to limit supply deliveries, EAM/ELAS did cooperate with the British in June and July 1943 for Operation ANIMALS, an important cover operation in Greece designed to mislead the Germans into believing that an imminent Allied invasion, planned for Sicily, would occur in Greece.

During the summer of 1943, Brigadier Myers was recalled to Middle East headquarters in Cairo for discussions. He was exfiltrated in a British plane which picked him up behind German lines on a landing strip built at Neraida by the Greeks under the supervision of a British liaison officer. Taking along guerrilla leaders who wanted to meet with members of the Greek government-in-exile, Myers arrived in Cairo and soon found himself in the midst of a political imbroglio. Communist demands presented by Tzimas at this time alerted the Greeks in Cairo and Prime Minister Winston Churchill in England to the tenor of EAM/ELAS aims. In this highly charged situation, Myers became persona non grata to King George II and did not return that autumn to Greece, where Colonel Woodhouse took over. 5

Henceforth, the Communist menace latent in the Greek guerrilla situation was a recognized fact of life. Churchill now regarded the political threat implicit in EAM/ELAS as more important than its possible military contribution to the Allied cause. Inside Greece, therefore, the mission of the British liaison officers was to work with the guerrillas, to try to get them to fight the enemy rather than each other—and, most important, to keep EAM/ELAS from attaining such strength that it could seize power over all of Greece.

During the next year, the relations of the Allied Military Mission with the guerrillas ranged from invariably excellent in the case of Zervas and EDES to often execrable in the case of EAM/ELAS. From the fall of 1943 to the fall of 1944, when Axis forces left the country, EAM/ELAS movements were predominantly political in meaning even when military in appearance.

**ELAS Guerrillas Get Italian Weapons and Attack EDES**

EAM/ELAS was greatly aided in its maneuverings when, in the fall of 1943, it found an independent source of arms and ammunition. In September, following the armistice with the Allies, the Italian armies in Greece (as elsewhere) capitulated, and about 10,000 to 12,000 well-armed troops of the Pinerolo Division surrendered to the combined headquarters of the guerrillas and Colonel Woodhouse, with the proviso that Italians willing to fight the Germans might keep their arms. EAM/ELAS actually accepted the surrender, since it was in control of the territory in which the division was stationed. Within days, EAM/ELAS managed to dissipate the strength of the Italians; and in mid-October it disarmed the troops completely, thus freeing itself from dependence, for the while at least, on British-supplied arms and ammunition.
With weapons at hand, the forces of EAM/ELAS now set out to destroy the guerrillas of EDES, their strongest competitor. But simultaneously the Germans, taking over in Greece from the Italians, began a series of antiguerilla drives that threatened the very existence of the insurgent movement. In addition, the British resupplied Zervas very heavily and, though down to 70 men at one point, he managed to pull through.

**EAM/ELAS Sets Conditions for Guerrilla Truce**

Sporadic fighting in the three-way combat went on all autumn, and the internecine guerrilla warfare ended only in early 1944, when EAM/ELAS set its terms for a cease-fire: (1) Zervas was to repudiate collaborators in EDES, (2) guerrillas were to remain in their current positions, and (3) a conference of guerrillas and the Allied Military Mission (AMM) was to be held to discuss a united guerrilla army and a government of national unity.

The first condition was met. On February 19, 1944, representatives of EAM/ELAS, EDES, EKKA, and the AMM signed a document stating that they regarded the Axis-sponsored Greek puppet government as the enemy of Greece. At the same time, Zervas repudiated certain members of EDES as collaborators. Seemingly incidental, this repudiation had great significance. First, it was an indication of what was happening politically to EDES: in Athens, it was divided between a rightwing and a leftwing element that were mutually incompatible; and in the mountains, it was becoming increasingly pro-monarchist and rightwing under Zervas, who had pledged himself as early as the spring of 1943 to work for the restoration of the King "even without the people's wishes," and who had apparently accepted into his organization men of rightwing, even collaborationist, tendencies. Second, by this repudiation, Zervas acknowledged, to a limited but important extent, that the EAM/ELAS charges of collaboration had some basis in reality. EAM/ELAS had won a propaganda point.

**The Plaka Armistice**

The cease-fire territorial distribution called for under the second EAM/ELAS point was extremely advantageous to the Communists, but it was accepted in the Plaka Armistice, signed on February 29, 1944, by EDES, EKKA, EAM/ELAS, and the AMM. This ended the interguerilla war and gave official sanction to the very real fact that EAM/ELAS controlled most of the Greek mainland, while EDES, quartered in Epirus, was literally hemmed in along the western coast of Greece.

The third EAM/ELAS demand, concerning a united guerrilla army and a government of national unity, was beyond the scope of the AMM to discuss; and the Plaka Armistice contained no references to purely political matters. A secret clause, inserted at Woodhouse's behest, stated that EAM/ELAS, EDES, and EKKA would cooperate closely in plans (code named NOAH'S ARK) to harass the German withdrawal and would accept the infiltration into Greece of British and American units.
Communists Set Up Underground Government and Challenge Greek Government-in-Exile

Having failed at Plaka to produce any political arrangement, EAM/ELAS now unilaterally set up its own political organization to run the part of Greece which it controlled. The creation of the Political Committee for National Liberation (Politiki Epitropi Ethnikis Apeleftheroseos, or PEEA) was announced on March 26, 1944, and attracted a large number of highly respected non-Communist Greeks. It established itself at Viniani, where the parish priest administered the oath of office to the leaders. Taking advantage of the groundswell of Greek nationalism, the Communists dissembled—abolishing the post of political adviser in ELAS, for example—and held elections in the mountains for a parliament. Prof. Alexandros Svolos, a man of integrity and distinction, was brought in to head PEEA.

Through these moves, EAM/ELAS undercut the position of the Greek government-in-exile, which was now clearly unrepresentative of political life inside Greece. Furthermore, mutinies in Greek army and navy units in the Middle East began in April 1944 and could not be put down by the exile government. Within Greece, EAM/ELAS destroyed EKKA, killing Colonel Psaros; and in so doing they gained clear political and military hegemony over mountain Greece, with the single exception of the area around Epirus, in western Greece, which continued to be controlled by the EDES guerrillas. From its position of strength, therefore, EAM/ELAS agreed to participate in a conference to be held in Lebanon in May to discuss a possible government of national unity, and it sent a seven-man delegation, including both Saraphis and Svolos, to meet with representatives of the government-in-exile.

EAM/ELAS Threat Is Parried

Although EAM/ELAS obviously felt that its prospects for dominating the new government of national unity were excellent, this opportunity never developed. The British and anti-Communist Greeks had quietly joined forces to bring together at the Grand Hotel du Bois de Boulogne, in a Lebanese village of the same name, a group of anti-EAM Greek politicians exfiltrated directly from the mainland. Headed by the new Prime Minister of the Greek government-in-exile, Georgios Papandhreou, these men closed ranks against the Svolos delegation. Shocked by the violent political attack upon them at the Lebanon meeting, the representatives of EAM/ELAS accepted virtually all of Prime Minister Papandhreou's eight-point political program, known as the Lebanon Charter. EAM/ELAS promptly disavowed this action of the Svolos group and refused to join the new government; it demanded that Papandhreou resign. Svolos returned to Greece. With this failure of its political thrust, EAM/ELAS was ready to return to military means, and Saraphis was ordered to plan for the final destruction of EDES.

This threat, however, was dissipated during the summer of 1944 by a number of concurrent events and actions. Papandhreou refused to resign and proceeded to fill the cabinet positions
he had previously held open for EAM/ELAS. The British and Americans began to send small irregular units of Allied troops into Greece for interdiction operations against the Germans. Zervas, heavily supplied by the British, continued his harassing operations, begun that summer, against EAM/ELAS guerrillas. A Russian delegation which secretly arrived at ELAS headquarters on July 28 failed to send EAM/ELAS the supplies necessary for action against EDES. Meanwhile, the Germans began a series of heavy mopping-up operations directed mainly against EAM/ELAS. And it may be that, in addition to all this, in the summer of 1944 EAM/ELAS "momentarily lost its nerve," as Colonel Woodhouse later suggested. 13

In any case, the EAM/ELAS offensive against EDES was called off; PEEA and EAM/ELAS representatives joined the government of national unity on September 2; ELAS acted to improve its relations with the British; and finally, on September 26, Saraphis signed the Caserta Agreement. 14 EAM/ELAS thereby accepted a British commander over its forces, as well as important limitations on its actions—guerrillas were not to attempt to seize power, they were not to enter the Athens area, and they were to cooperate with EDES in the coming liberation of Greece. Having lost, for the time being, both its political and military bids for power, EAM/ELAS apparently lived up to the Caserta Agreement when German troops began to pull out of Greece in the fall of 1944.

Guerrilla Operations Stress Attacks on Transportation System

The political events that preceded and followed the guerrillas' cooperation in harassing the German withdrawal have obscured their military achievements. It is just as well, therefore, to deal separately and directly with this subject. The Greek guerrillas during World War II, engrossed as they were with the form of the postwar Greek government, were neither particularly aggressive nor particularly effective; but they added a certain specific value to the overall military prosecution of the war.

The primary target for the guerrillas during the entire wartime period was the highly vulnerable transportation system. The guerrillas under both Aris and Zervas aided the British party in its attack on the Gorgopotamos bridge in November 1942 by engaging the Italian garrisons at either end of the bridge while the British demolition party did its work. Until September 1943, the guerrillas were fairly active, particularly in the Italian zone of occupation, in ambushing road parties, convoys, and trains and in demolishing culverts, bridges, and other road and rail installations. They reduced the Italian ability to move safely, and their attacks on small outlying garrisons often caused these to be withdrawn. EAM/ELAS, in particular, benefited from this withdrawal, assuming control of larger and larger sections of the country.

Operations ANIMALS and NOAH'S ARK

In June and July 1943, the Greek guerrillas cooperated in Operation ANIMALS by making a series of attacks on transportation targets and on small outlying troop garrisons.
The objective of ANIMALS was to make the Axis think that Greece rather than Sicily would be the target of the Allied invasion in July; and the British credited the Greek guerrillas with tying down at least one and possibly two German divisions that might otherwise have been diverted to Sicily. During ANIMALS, a six-man British party sabotaged the Asopos bridge, again interdicting the rail line for a number of weeks. Although EAM/ELAS refused to assist directly in this operation, their control of the area and their silence made it possible for the British party to perform the mission successfully.

After the Germans took control of the Italian-occupied areas in September 1943, guerrilla operations were confined to small-scale attacks and sabotage; most guerrilla operations in the following year were defensive in nature. Then in September 1944, the guerrillas put Operation NOAH'S ARK into full swing, centering their attention on roads and the north-south rail line. Despite their orderly withdrawal, the Germans were forced to fight their way north and were undoubtedly slowed up in their retreat from the country. In general, Greek guerrilla operations lacked aggressiveness but had definite nuisance value for the Allies.

**Guerrilla Casualties**

Even such operations as these were not accomplished without cost. EAM/ELAS claimed casualties of 4,500 killed and 6,000 wounded: one out of four ELAS guerrillas. EDES and EKKA, as well as other, minor guerrilla groups, suffered casualties, the precise numbers of which are unknown; many of their casualties were suffered during attacks initiated by EAM/ELAS.

**COUNTERINSURGENCY**

Despite the fact that there was a Greek puppet government in Athens, the occupation authorities carried the major counterinsurgency burden. At first this had fallen not so much on the Germans or Bulgarians as on the Italians, who had received the largest mainland zone of occupation. In general, Italian troops were no more effective against Greek irregulars than they had been somewhat earlier against Greek regulars. The various resistance movements were organized in Athens under Italian eyes. In 1942 and 1943, the insurgent leaders moved out of Athens and began recruiting guerrillas in the mountain villages, where the troops of the Italian Eleventh Army, under Gen. Carlo Vecchiarelli, moved indecisively. The Germans complained that even vital supply roads were allowed to remain under contest; for example, control of the Metsovon Highway, the only major east-west road in northern Greece, was intermittently lost. When Italian supply convoys were ambushed or outlying troops attacked, the Italian response was inconsistent: the troops sent to nearby villages sometimes only made inquiries but sometimes they burned houses and hanged villagers. Very rarely did Italian troops find or engage the
guerrillas. An experiment in setting up a semi-autonomous Vlach state in southwestern Macedonia, with armed legionaries to cope with the guerrillas, apparently never very effective, was abandoned in 1942. 16 During this summer of increasing guerrilla operations, the Italians began to withdraw their outlying garrisons to the larger towns, leaving the mountain areas to become guerrilla ground.

Italians Withdraw From War, Leaving Germans With a Guerrilla Problem

By the fall of 1943, the Italian nation, defeated and despairing, had undergone an internal anti-Fascist coup, and the new non-Fascist Italian government of King Victor Emmanuel III and Marshal Pietro Badoglio signed an armistice with the Allied powers on September 3. This was announced five days later, on the eve of the Allied invasion of southern Italy. The Italian moves had not caught the Germans entirely by surprise. Operation ACHSE (AXIS) had been planned for the contingency of Italian defection, and German commanders in Italy* and elsewhere knew exactly what to do. In Greece, the German forces had been increased to five divisions, and a Bulgarian division was under direct German control. The Germans now demanded the immediate surrender of the Italian Eleventh Army, which in July had been placed under direct German theater control.

General Vecchiarelli, highly regarded by the Germans as a "good Prussian," surrendered immediately, but his Italian army of about 270,000 men did not behave in so disciplined a fashion. Some 120,000 Italians are estimated to have escaped from the Greek mainland or islands by one means or another. On a number of islands—for example, Cephalonia, Corfu, Rhodes,† and Samos—Italian forces fought German troops before being subdued. On the mainland, about 12,000 men from the Pinerolo Division and the Aosta Cavalry Brigade went over to the guerrillas. Furthermore, many of those Italian units who were surrendering to the Germans withdrew from their posts before the Germans arrived, giving the guerrillas a chance, quickly taken, to expand control over areas. Italian troops also forfeited stocks of weapons to the guerrillas, and many individual soldiers sold their weapons, adding to guerrilla strength. But by the end of September 1943, the Germans had obtained the surrender of the main strength of the Italian Eleventh Army. 18

In taking over primary responsibility for the occupation of Greece, the Germans inherited an insurgency problem that had never been adequately coped with and which now had grown immeasurably more difficult. They estimated that, with the Italian defection, somewhat between two-thirds and four-fifths of Greek mainland territory was in guerrilla hands. The transportation system was subject to guerrilla harassment; the Metsovon Highway, in fact, was completely

* For a description of events within Italy, see Chapter Seven, "Italy (1943-1945)."
† The chief island in the Dodecanese group, Rhodes was taken over by Italy during the Italo-Turkish war of 1911-12. Ethnically Greek, it was ceded by Italy to Greece after the end of World War II.
closed and supplies were being detoured. The German response was, on the whole, orderly and fairly efficient. Almost simultaneously, they set about reorganizing the occupation; taking steps to improve their troop strength; and asserting area control, particularly over strategic areas and key points.

**German Organization in Greece Is Complex and Overlapping**

Organizationally, Greece fell under the aegis of the German Southeast Theater, which included all the occupied Balkan countries and was commanded by Field Marshal Maximilian von Weichs. German troops in Greece were under the command of Gen. Alexander Loehr, who, as head of Army Group E, was directly responsible for both the coastal defense of Greece and its internal security. Under Army Group E, the LXVIII Corps and the XXII Mountain Corps were assigned areas of tactical responsibility—the former for eastern Greece and the Peloponnesus, the latter for the Epirus region of southern Albania and western Greece to the Gulf of Patras. These two corps, with a combined total of three divisions regularly assigned, were the mainstay of General Loehr's tactical strength, although other commands under Army Group E obtained corps status by the beginning of 1944. These were Fortress Crete; the Salonika-Aegean Administrative Area, with headquarters in Salonika; and a Bulgarian corps, operating in Thrace and Eastern Macedonia, which would come under Loehr in the event of an Allied invasion attempt. Because of certain complexities in the administrative organization of Greece, however, General Loehr did not have an entirely clear field. In addition to Army Group E, the Germans had at least two separate military commands in Greece.

One was Military Command Greece, situated in Athens and headed by Lt. Gen. Wilhelm Speidel, who reported, not to von Weichs, but to the Military Commander Southeast, whose main and consuming responsibility for combat against Yugoslav guerrillas in Serbia precluded his paying very much attention to problems in Greece. General Speidel was supposed to have executive power and territorial authority to administer Greece, while General Loehr had strategic and tactical military control. As Loehr saw his role, the guerrilla warfare in Greece made certain economic, financial, and administrative requirements tactically necessary. As Speidel viewed the situation, such tactical requirements paralyzed his organization and infringed on his command. "It was unavoidable," he later wrote, "that these two so widely differing conceptions should lead to severe controversies."

Another source of organizational difficulty was the role of the Senior SS and Police Leader for Greece, a post created in September 1943. SS Gen. Walter Schimana, who occupied this position, was nominally responsible to General Speidel; in fact, he had sole responsibility for police matters and did not report on these to Speidel, but, rather, directly to Reichs Leader SS Heinrich Himmler in Germany. General Schimana was also responsible for antiguerrilla warfare in certain combat areas. Thus Schimana's role overlapped and impinged upon those of both
General Speidel and General Loehr, while Schimana himself was in a position to bypass both of these commanders.

In addition to the military leaders, one other person figured importantly in the German occupation of Greece. The Special Plenipotentiary, Ambassador Hermann Neubacher, represented German political and economic interests in the Balkans and in this role was directly involved in the antiguerilla combat in Greece. He was far more concerned, for example, with the long-range consequences of the growth of communism in Greece than with the tactical requirements of Army Group E. The complexity of the German organization in Greece and the interplay between individual commanders—which reflected the labyrinthine infrastructure of the Nazi administration within Germany—resulted in a certain inconsistency in the direction of counterinsurgent operations in Greece.

Axis Problems Concerning Troop Strength, Readiness, and Morale

Not only did the Germans have internal organizational problems in Greece, but they faced severe difficulties in procuring sufficient troops to manage the occupation. By the fall of 1943, the German attack on the U.S.S.R. had turned into a debacle, and the eastern front was literally devouring German divisions. As a result, the numbers of troops available for the Southeastern theater were severely limited. It is estimated that the Germans at this time had 14 divisions and about 600,000 men with which to occupy the entire Balkan area, including Yugoslavia, where guerrilla warfare was competing in its intensity and casualties with the front lines. By the end of 1943 the German commitment in the Balkans had risen to 20 divisions and about 700,000 men; but of these only 5 divisions and an estimated total of 140,000 men were assigned to Greece, and by mid-1944 this strength was to drop to about 100,000 men.

Furthermore, few of the German divisions in Greece were composed of first-class troops. Having only a few combat-ready units such as the 1st Mountain Division, the Germans were forced to depend largely on an assortment of over-age, postconvalescent units, "fortress" regiments composed of former general military prisoners, and certain "Eastern" regiments composed of U.S.S.R. citizens of Tatar derivation willing to fight on the German side. Some of the last had to be disarmed in 1944.

Bulgarian troops—estimated at 40,000 in strength—were, with the exception of one division, generally under their own tactical command. Although the Bulgarians were regarded by the Germans as good soldiers and effective in antiguerilla operations, they had their own ideas about running the war in Greece and therefore presented difficulties. They tended to stay in German-occupied territory after tactical missions were completed, they did not want to turn over weapons or booty captured from Greek guerrillas, they diverted troops from coastal defense to internal security, and they were disenchanted by German defeats. By mid-1944 some Bulgarians serving in German units also had to be disarmed.
Unfortunately for the Germans, the Italians—that vast reservoir of potential troop strength—proved a disappointing source of manpower. Of the thousands and thousands of Italian troops who surrendered to the Germans in the fall of 1943, some went into prisoner-of-war camps, some joined noncombat labor battalions, and some took on armed guard and security duty. But few chose to fight on the side of the Germans, and those few proved generally undependable from the German viewpoint. When asked to take an oath of allegiance to the Axis, about 30 percent of the Italians refused. The Germans dispersed the Italians throughout their own units at the ratio of one company of 40 Italians per German security battalion, but Italian disaffection increased throughout the war. The Germans could never place complete reliance on the Italian troops serving in German ranks.22

Greek Security Battalions

The most effective measure the Germans took to improve their troops strength was to encourage the puppet Rallis government to continue the plan initiated in the summer of 1943 of recruiting Greek security battalions to fight the guerrillas. Total enrollment in these battalions has been variously estimated at between 5,000 and 15,000 men. Recruitment for the security battalions often succeeded among those who had been in guerrilla units eliminated by EAM/ELAS or who feared the growth of a Communist guerrilla group or who were faced with the problem of survival. Most of the men in the security battalions apparently came from among the conservative and anti-Communist peasants of the south, particularly those in the Peloponnesus.

Nominally commanded by Greek officers, each unit in the battalions had a German liaison officer who was often the actual commander. Because the Greek security battalions were experienced, were knowledgeable about the terrain and the guerrilla enemy, and fought without expectation or grant of quarter, they were extremely effective in antiguerrilla operations. They must be viewed as an important German success in the counterinsurgency flight.

Urban Security Measures

German strategy, taking into account the severe limitations on resources, was not predicated upon controlling all the Greek countryside. Troop shortages dictated a plan of antiguerrilla defense limited to securing from attack those areas needed for military purposes—mainly the transportation network and those towns and villages located along it.

To maintain urban security, the army post or station commander took ordinary precautions—for example, closing all except certain roads leading from the town and establishing traffic checkpoints on these. If the threat was great and the population hostile, he sometimes had trenches, obstacles, observation posts, and combat installations built at vulnerable points. Guerrillas and even Allied liaison officers were often able to breach these defenses, coming into and leaving the towns; but the presence of German troops was generally sufficient to
preclude guerrilla attacks within the towns. What the Germans termed "outer security" was thus never complete, but it sufficed.

"Inner security"—the protection of important areas or installations within the towns—was more stringent; and again, while it was impossible to avoid all sabotage, the situation was generally supportable. Since the Germans were forced to use Greek manpower for many jobs, however, they could not prevent intelligence leaks, and this was a continuous problem. Furthermore, the practice of billeting troops in private homes led to close relations with the population and security leaks. The Germans complained bitterly that their every step was immediately known to the guerrillas. Defensive counterintelligence was always a problem for the Germans.

Defence of Roads and Railways

The Greek roads and railways, often stretching through mountains, traversing bridges, and overlooked by high bluffs, were extremely vulnerable to guerrilla attack. Since there were almost no alternative roads or rail lines, protection of the existing network was vital. The Germans used a number of methods. Road traffic was generally handled in convoys and sent out on irregular schedules, and the positions of defense vehicles were changed frequently so as to avoid setting a pattern for attack. In addition, barrier zones were set up, and fortifications erected on each side of important bridges or tunnels. Strong points were built along the roads and manned by troops who patrolled the intervening areas. However, since blockhouses were built at intervals of six miles and were sometimes manned by as few as eight men, the system was quite vulnerable.

To improve road security, roving motorized road-control detachments were used to supplement the foot patrols; they checked civilians using the road, tested combat readiness of the strong points, and came to the assistance of any group under attack. These detachments, operating at platoon strength, mounted on armored vehicles, and armed with machineguns, 20-mm. antiaircraft artillery, and searchlights, were effective against both air and guerrilla attacks. Their use was limited, however, by vehicle and fuel shortages. Air patrols were generally unavailable, again owing to aircraft and fuel shortages.

Rail lines were defended in much the same way. The area on either side of the track was restricted and unauthorized personnel in the zone—three miles wide in rural areas—would be shot on sight. Station houses were fortified and other strong points were established. Armored cars patrolled the roads and accompanied trains. Furthermore, Greek personnel running the trains were a form of hostage against guerrilla attack; when their presence proved insufficient as a deterrent, Greek civilians were rounded up and carried as hostages in cages pushed ahead of the locomotives.
German Antiguerrilla Tactics

Combat operations against the guerrillas were characterized by the Germans as either major or minor. Minor operations occurred when contact with guerrillas was made inadvertently or in response to guerrilla attacks; they were carried out by troop units below divisional level; and, although sometimes planned, they were usually impromptu in nature. Small-scale tactics usually consisted of forming a pocket and combing the area; but since the Germans lacked secrecy, surprise, and sufficient troops to make an adequate encirclement, their attempts often degenerated into punitive expeditions, which they did not regard as particularly effective.

Major operations, on the other hand, were, from the German viewpoint, more successful. These were undertaken against strong, entrenched forces and only on the basis of adequate information concerning the guerrillas' hideouts and habits. Information was obtained through ground and air reconnaissance, monitoring of guerrilla radio and telephone communications, study of captured documents, and the interrogation of prisoners. The use of spies was also attempted, but the number caught by the guerrillas appears to indicate that, in general, these were not particularly effective. Even after active operations had started, intelligence collection was continued; the value of air reconnaissance was clearly demonstrated; and the monitoring of guerrilla communications, which were often given in the clear during operations, was limited only by the availability of interpreters.

Major operations were minutely planned by one or two officers, and extraordinary attention was paid to the maintenance of secrecy and security. Only after the plan was complete were division commanders briefed and rehearsed in a map exercise; they then briefed regimental and independent unit commanders, but no others. Indeed, attempts were often made to deceive German troops, so that leaks in security might misinform guerrilla intelligence.

Major Operations Emphasize Encirclement

The purpose of major operations was not to take terrain, but to destroy guerrillas. The almost universal tactic planned for a large operation was to make a large encirclement, then to compress the ring and push the guerrillas inward, and finally to come to grips with and destroy the guerrillas in battle. To compensate for their lack of trained, combat-ready troops, the Germans used second-class troops for stationary blocking operations and first-class troops for assault echelons. When possible, these were followed by reserves, so that local guerrilla break-throughs could be intercepted. The Germans also tried to cover possible escape routes by echeloning machinegun positions in depth. To counteract guerrilla attempts to remain hidden as troops passed by, German commanders also inaugurated the practice of having a second line to comb territory already passed by forward units. They also learned that, even after the final battle had been fought and the guerrillas had surrendered, it paid to comb the area of encirclement still again; by so doing, they flushed out surprisingly large numbers of hiding guerrillas.
One of the most interesting of the German discoveries about tactics concerned the matter of timing. While it was extremely important to reach and close the outer encirclement line quickly, the Germans learned that, from this point on, they should take whatever time was needed to ensure a slow, steady compression, avoiding gaps in the line and troop fatigue. The important thing was to keep the guerrillas within the ring and to destroy them methodically.

Results of German Antiguerrilla Operations

The Germans inflicted heavy losses on the guerrillas in these operations. In Operation PANTHER, undertaken in late 1943 to clear major transportation routes, the Germans used more than two divisions against EAM/ELAS and EDES and claimed 1,400 guerrilla casualties. In early 1944, German and Bulgarian troops made a number of sweeps in northeastern Greece which, according to German records, were highly profitable. In Operation WOLF, the Germans inflicted guerrilla casualties of 254 dead and 400 captured; in Operation HORRIDO, guerrilla casualties were 310 dead and 15 captured, compared with German losses of only 18 dead, wounded, and missing (a ratio of 18 to 1); and in Operation RENNTIER, the Germans and Bulgarians killed 96 and captured 100 guerrillas, while suffering only 9 casualties (a ratio of almost 22 to 1). Operation ILTIS, however, resulted in a mere 15 guerrilla casualties.

In 1944 the Germans concentrated against the forces of EAM/ELAS. In Operation MAIGEWITTER, undertaken in the spring of 1944 against ELAS forces in northern Greece, the Germans claimed to have killed 339 guerrillas and to have captured 75 guerrillas and and 200 suspects. MAIGEWITTER was followed in June by Operation GEMSBOCK, which employed three German divisions against 9,000 ELAS and other Communist forces on the Greek-Albanian border. Guerrilla losses, again according to German records, amounted to 2,500 killed or captured, with German losses of 120 killed and 300 wounded—the ratio dropping in this instance to 6 to 1. It should also be noted that, despite fairly high casualties, the guerrillas successfully extricated about 72 percent of their forces.

GEMSBOCK was followed by Operation STEINADLER. Using about 18,000 troops, the Germans moved against ELAS forces estimated at 6,000 to 8,000 in north-central Greece. Savage fighting, including the guerrillas' murder and mutilation of 80 wounded in a German battalion aid station which they overran, finally resulted in the killing of 567 guerrillas and the German capture of 976 guerrillas, 341 Italians, and 7 British officers. Despite these heavy losses, the German commander noted that strong guerrilla groups reappeared in the same area a few weeks later—corroboration of the fact that ELAS had extricated somewhere between 75 and 81 percent of its guerrillas.

Operation KREUZOTTER was planned as a three-phase attack: the first two were to be launched against ELAS forces in southwestern Greece and Boeotia, the third against EDES. ELAS losses from this August 1944 operation amounted to 298 killed and 260 captured, while the
Germans lost 20 killed, 112 captured, and 1 missing—a ratio of about 4 to 1. The third phase of KREUZOTTER was apparently canceled by the pressure of events in late summer 1944; although there may have been local action, there is no available German record of large-scale operations against EDES at this time.

The casualty figures derived from these German operations demonstrate the efficiency of planned military operations against guerrillas, but they cloud a major point. Although German military operations succeeded in inflicting heavy casualties on the guerrillas, in disrupting guerrilla organization, and in re-establishing German control over specific points, they did not succeed in eliminating the guerrillas, whose strength, if not military efficiency, was increasing. In retrospect, this is not too surprising, since the Germans lacked both sufficient troops to hold the ground they gained in operations and the popular support necessary to attempt to destroy the guerrillas outright. Although tactically they sought to destroy the guerrilla bands, the Germans were realistic enough to know that, strategically, they could not eliminate the guerrillas in the country as a whole.

**German Attempts To Control the Population by Reprisals**

Whatever expectation of Greek support the Germans might have had in 1941, the Greeks had learned by the end of 1943 to distrust and fear the Germans. On the other hand, German tactical commanders in Greece blamed the Greek population for the existence and growth of the guerrilla bands. Desiring to separate the guerrillas from the population but lacking the resources for mass resettlement, German commanders felt that the way to control the population was to show extreme "firmness": every act against the occupier would bring reprisals, and local inhabitants would be held responsible for what occurred in their area. The Germans could not have failed to realize that the populace could not actually stop any specific guerrilla operation or that the people were in no position to refuse food or shelter to armed guerrillas who arrived at the door. Apparently the policy of the Germans was to make themselves even more feared than the guerrillas—so feared that Greeks would be alienated from and betray the guerrillas in order to end this double menace to their own existence.

Although reprisals had been taken against the population before the fall of 1943, the ratio had been generally at 10-to-1, low in comparison with the 50-to-1 and 100-to-1 ratios imposed in the Slavic countries. After the German takeover that fall, however, reprisals became more severe, reaching 30 to 1 and even 50 to 1. Sometimes the victims were selected from among persons already imprisoned and marked for death—Jews and known Communists, for example; sometimes they were hostages previously taken to prevent guerrilla attacks; sometimes they were simply persons taken off the street at random after an attack had occurred.

Occasionally minor operations initiated in response to guerrilla attack ended in widespread reprisals. A mopping-up operation begun in December 1943 in the Peloponnesus, in retaliation...
for an ELAS killing of 78 captured German soldiers the previous day near Kalavrita, resulted in few if any guerrilla casualties—but 24 villages and 3 monasteries were destroyed and 696 Greek men were shot. Although Ambassador Neubacher denounced the reprisals at theater level, little change was actually made in the policy, as indicated by the following order, made by the German theater commander on December 22, 1943. "If such people as are guilty cannot be found, those persons must be resorted to who, without being connected with the actual deed, nevertheless are to be regarded as coreresponsible."23

In April 1944, a similar incident occurred at Klisoura in Macedonia. Here troops of the 7th SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment, including Bulgarian elements, surrounded the village after two German motorcyclists had been killed about a mile and a half away. The able-bodied men had already fled, and the troops therefore rounded up the aged, the women, and the children, including nine less than one year old. All 223 of these were shot to death, and the village was burned. This incident, remarkable for its savagery, elicited a violent protest from Neubacher, who called it the "blood bath" of Klisoura. Nevertheless such incidents recurred—in June, 270 inhabitants were shot in Dhistomon. A German secret field police observer noted, however, that none were "beaten to death by rifle butt or [killed] by pouring gasoline over them and setting them on fire,"28 as presumably had occurred elsewhere. The Dhistomon reprisal was illegal even by German standards, since it had been initiated, not by a divisional commander, but by a company commander. His regimental commander recommended leniency for him, however, since the action "corresponded to a natural soldierly feeling" and had obviated the need to send later "a strong mission with corresponding high fuel consumption."29 Greek government sources were to estimate later that by the end of the occupation 1,770 Greek villages lay in ashes.

Ambassador Neubacher perceived quite clearly the results of such irresponsible and irrational terrorization. Selection of victims at random meant that pro-German Greeks ran the same risk as anti-Germans, so that there was no value in being either collaborationist or neutral. The reprisals, directed as they were against the aged, the women, and the children, left men homeless and gave them reason to hate the Germans; they drove men to the guerrillas, not away from them. And as Neubacher noted, "The political effect . . . by far exceeds the effect of all propaganda efforts in our fight against communism."30 As the most widespread, articulate, and active guerrilla organization, EAM/ELAS was the undoubted beneficiary of German methods. This was soon to be proved.

**OUTCOME AND CONCLUSIONS**

On September 10, 1944, the guerrillas began Operation NOAH'S ARK, designed to harass the final German withdrawal from Greece. By the end of September, the German position in Greece
was untenable—not as a result of NOAH’S ARK but because of their overall military situation. By early October, German troops were out of the Peloponnesus; on October 12, they left Athens; by October 30, they had pulled out of Salonika; and by early November, they had left the Greek mainland entirely—in orderly fashion despite the harassment. The Bulgarian withdrawal, complete on October 25, was followed by the signing of an armistice on the 28th. The Allied Military Mission to the Greek guerrillas ceased to exist as such, although the liaison officers were often retained to effect demobilization of their guerrilla units.

Meanwhile, in late September, British forces under Lt. Gen. Ronald Scobie had begun to enter the south of Greece for Operation MANNA, counterpart to NOAH’S ARK and frankly designed to keep the Communists in EAM/ELAS from prematurely seizing power before the government-in-exile could return and consolidate its position within Greece. The Papandhreou government returned to Athens on October 18, while EAM/ELAS installed itself at Lamia in central Greece. The question of postwar control of Greece had not been settled, but the period of Axis counterinsurgency was ended.

**Costs of the Guerrilla War and the Occupation to the Greeks and Allies**

The German occupation and antiguerilla warfare had indeed been costly for the Greeks. Not only were there more than 10,000 guerrilla casualties, but an estimated 70,000 civilians were the victims of Axis reprisals. Greek transportation facilities had been wrecked, partly as a result of guerrilla operations, partly because of Allied bombing in 1944: of 1,700 miles of railways, only 415 miles were left in a usable state. Occupation policies had imposed a further cost on the Greek economy: Greek villages had been razed and a large segment of the population left wandering and homeless, and probably no other country had suffered so much from the effects of a raging inflation.

In comparison with these Greek costs, those for the Allies had been small indeed. It is estimated that fewer than 400 Allied troops were involved in Greek guerrilla operations; air-dropped supplies amounted to only 2,514 tons; seaborne supplies were undoubtedly modest; and the support cost, in terms of gold sovereigns, has been estimated at several million dollars—a total small in comparison with other wartime operations.

**Costs and Achievements of German Counterinsurgency**

German counterinsurgency had limited the achievements of the Allied-supported Greek guerrilla movement. At the most, only three German soldiers had been tied down by each guerrilla; and during many months, the tiedown ratio had been even lower. Furthermore, German casualties were estimated, on the basis of extremely rough guesses, at only 5,000 to 15,000 men, with probability strongly favoring the smaller figure. On the other hand, one or two German divisions had been kept in Greece in the summer of 1943 when they could have been profitably
used in Sicily—an important factor. German communications had been intermittently disrupted, particularly by the attacks on major bridge installations. It might be said that, although the German war effort was not critically affected by the Greek guerrillas, it had been harassed, its sharpness somewhat blunted, and its psychological self-image deflected. Germans had to admit that, if they were feared, they were also hated; even worse, the growth of the Greek guerrilla movement implied Greek belief in eventual German defeat. In this sense, the mere existence of the guerrillas offered a psychological rebuttal to the Germans.

It has been stated that, in the end, the Germans were able to turn the guerrilla movement against the Allies. Colonel Woodhouse has claimed 32 that the Germans, recognizing the intense incompatibility of the Communist aims of EAM/ELAS and those of the British, turned the situation to their own advantage by leaving stocks of arms for EAM/ELAS to find. This has been denied by the German corps commander. But whether the events of late 1944 occurred by accident or design, British troops were to fight EAM/ELAS guerrillas, and this circumstance certainly played into Axis hands.

EAM/ELAS Bids for Political Power

As German counterinsurgency against the Greek guerrillas came to an end in the fall of 1944, EAM/ELAS, although in control of the Greek countryside, had not succeeded in achieving its larger objective, domination of the postwar government. Furthermore, with strong British support, the newly returned government was pressing to demobilize the guerrillas and to create a new Greek army. Thus the Greek Communists saw their ELAS army, so carefully tended and saved, in danger of being dismantled.

With time running out, EAM/ELAS tried to delay demobilization of its forces. When this was unavailing, it prepared to move politically to bring down the Papandhreou government; and it took certain military steps—bringing troops closer to Athens, calling up its Athenian reserves, and arranging for a demonstration in the streets, for example—to demonstrate its power and its popularity. Apparently it hoped, by this show of force, to bring about a new government in which its voice would be the most powerful.

The "December War" Sets British and Greeks Against EAM/ELAS

The plan backfired because the street demonstration led to bloodshed, and when the Communists undertook further military steps, they were met by Greek government and British resistance. The "December War" 33 that followed saw the British bring into Greece troop reinforcements of two divisions from the still active Italian theater.

In the countryside, EAM/ELAS units disposed of Zervas' guerrillas in Epirus and of other independent bands in Macedonia; but in Athens they were isolated, since British aircraft patrolled the roads and prevented the arrival of trained reinforcements, and the Athenian ELAS
reserves proved to be untrained and untested. Military pressure finally forced EAM/ELAS out of Athens.

In this period EAM/ELAS lost even more than the military battle: after December, most Greeks could neither view it as an organization with noble and patriotic aims, nor ignore any longer the fact that it was Communist dominated. Taking on its retreat from Athens a number of civilian hostages, many of whom suffered severely and died in the cold, and leaving behind the unpleasant evidence of the retribution it had exacted in people's tribunals, EAM/ELAS lost its patriotic image. Also, the British, insisting that they would deal only with the real leadership of EAM/ELAS, forced Georgos Siantos, acting secretary-general of the KKE, into the foreground, thus discrediting the claim that EAM was a united front of many parties. Reorganization of the Greek government along coalition lines gave many previously pro-EAM Greeks a place of return, and they withdrew from EAM. By early January, EAM/ELAS was out of Athens and suing for an armistice. The Anglo-EAM "war" came to an end on January 15, 1945.

By the terms of the Varkiza Agreement of February 12, 1945, EAM/ELAS agreed to immediate demobilization and disarmament of its forces. In turn, the government agreed to maintain civil liberties, give amnesty for certain political crimes, purge collaborators, and hold a national plebiscite on the question of the monarchy. Among Greeks, the political pendulum moved to the right: the days of the "national front" were over and communism was certainly discredited, at least for the time being. Unfortunately, no national political consensus was reached, and dark days still loomed as the Greeks faced the intense problems of civilian distress, ruinous inflation, economic dislocation, governmental instability, and political immoderation. Worst of all, an even more dangerous period of insurgency* was yet to come.

In Retrospect

Two important strategic lessons† appear to emerge from the insurgency-counterinsurgency experience in wartime Greece, particularly with regard to the later postwar usage of insurgency as a Communist weapon. First, it demonstrated the difficulties an external sponsor has in maintaining control over an insurgent movement. This problem may also plague those Communist countries trying to exploit "wars of national liberation." One may ask, therefore, whether this possibility is given due consideration by the counterinsurgents of the West.

The second lesson concerns the German strategic concept. The German counterinsurgents accepted a limited strategic aim with regard to the Greek guerrillas, realizing that containment was sufficient for their purpose, at least until resolution of other problems could free them to raise the strategic objective. They failed in their aim because they lost the war, and this failure tends to obscure the inherent validity of their concept. Extrapolating from the Greek experience

* See Chapter Seventeen, "Greece (1946-1949)."
† For tactical lessons, see "Counterinsurgency" section.
to the present and future, one may ask whether simple denial of victory to Communist insurgents in a given area should not be viewed as a valid strategic counterinsurgent goal, at least until the resolution of other problem allows the strategic objective to be raised.
NOTES

Author's Note: This paper is based primarily on the research that was accomplished for and documented within the author's Case Study in Guerrilla War: Greece During World War II (Washington: Special Operations Research Office, 1961). Specific footnotes are included in the text of this paper mainly to give credit for quotations or opinions cited therein. The bibliography following these notes should give additional insights into the entire field of insurgency and counterinsurgency in wartime Greece.

1 See EAM aims as stated in 1942 by the Communist Demetrios Glenos in the EAM-published pamphlet, What is EAM and What Does It Want?


3 Denys Hamson, We Fell Among Greeks (London: Jonathan Cape [1946]), p. 98.

4 Of the twelve, at least three later published books based on their experience—E. C. W. Myers, C. M. Woodhouse, and Denys Hamson. (See bibliography for references.)

5 Maj. Gerald K. Wines later (around 1948) wrote an unpublished manuscript on his years behind German lines, "A Lesson In Greek." This he was kind enough to lend the author. Its foreword is by Colonel Woodhouse, who paid a very touching personal tribute to his American second in command.


7 See the memoirs of Saraphis, published as Greek Resistance Army: The Story of ELAS, tr. and abr. by Marion Pascoe (London: Birch Books, 1951).

8 Woodhouse, Apple of Discord, pp. 64-65.


10 Zervas, quoted in Woodhouse, Apple of Discord, p. 74.


12 See Woodhouse, Apple of Discord, p. 305, for a summary reprint of Papandhreou's eight points; see also Leeper, When Greek Meets Greek, pp. 50-53.


15 Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, p. 535; Myers, *Greek Entanglement*, pp. 204-205.

16 Saraphis, *Greek Resistance Army*, p. 278.

17 Woodhouse, *Apple of Discord*, p. 94.

18 United States Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, "Operation ACHSE, A Documented Narrative" (unpublished ms. R-2; Office of the Chief of Military History); and "Work Notes for Dissolution of the Italian Army in the Balkans, Sep. -Dec. 43" (unpublished ms. R-1; Office of the Chief of Military History).


23 For a discussion based on firsthand experience by a tactical commander engaged in extensive counterinsurgency operations, see "Partisan Warfare in the Balkans" by General Lanz, commander of the German XXII Mountain Corps; see also LXVIII Army Corps, *War Diary No. 3, 1 July-31 December 1943*, tr. and extracted in *Trials of War Criminals, XI*, 1030-32.

24 For casualty figures, see Lanz, "Partisan Warfare in the Balkans," and [Kennedy], *German Antiguerrilla Operations*.


26 Excerpts from this order are translated in *Trials of War Criminals, XI*, 826-27, 1306-1307.


28 Quoted in *Trials of War Criminals, XI*, 832.

29 Ibid., p. 833.

30 Ibid., p. 1036.


33 For the period of the December War, see William Hardy McNeill, *The Greek Dilemma: War and Aftermath* (New York: J. B. Lippincott, [1947]).

34 Great Britain, Foreign Office, *Documents Regarding the Situation in Greece, January 1945* (Greece No. 1 [1945]. Cmd. No. 6592; London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1945). This collection of documents includes nine concerning ELAS brutality to hostages in November-December 1944 (Pt. I), and the EDES charter plus four disclaimers of ELAS policy made in December 1944 by various political parties (Pt. II).

35 For text of the Varkiza Agreement, see Woodhouse, *Apple of Discord*, pp. 308-310.
SELECTED READING

Chase, George H. (ed.). Greece of Tomorrow. New York: American Friends of Greece, [1943]. This collection of eight essays is useful for general background material.

Churchill, Winston S. Closing the Ring and Triumph and Tragedy. (The Second World War, Vols. V and VI.) Boston: Houghton-Mifflin [1951, 1953]. Chapter 13, pp. 532-52, of Closing the Ring briefly reviews events in the Greek resistance movement leading up to the crucial summer of 1943; there is a discussion of the evolution of British policy in relation to EAM/ELAS up through the spring of 1944 and of the mutinies of the Greek forces in the Middle East. Chapters 18 and 19, pp. 283-325, of Triumph and Tragedy review the British liberation of Greece in the fall of 1944, the EAM/ELAS bid for power, and the December 1944 war.


Hadsel, Winifred H. "American Policy Towards Greece," Foreign Policy Association Reports, 23 (September 1, 1947), 146-60. This article summarizes the main events in Greece during World War II.

Hamson, Denys. We Fell Among Greeks. London: Jonathan Cape [1946]. The author parachuted into Greece as a member of the original British party and worked with EAM/ELAS guerrillas; his account is candid and interesting.


Kennedy, Robert M. German Antiguerrilla Operations in the Balkans (1941-1944). (U.S. Department of the Army Pamphlet 20-243.) Washington: Department of the Army, 1954. This study is based upon extensive use of captured German records and offers a German view of the guerrilla war in the Balkans, including Greece.


Leeper, Reginald. When Greek Meets Greek. London: Chatto and Windus, 1950. This memoir deals primarily with the political aspects of the Greek resistance, particularly as seen from the author's vantage place as British ambassador to the Greek government-in-exile in Cairo.


Myers, E. C. W. *Greek Entanglement.* London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1955. Brigadier Myers, who parachuted into Greece in September 1942, commanded the British Military Mission to the Greek guerrillas from January 1943 until he was exfiltrated in August 1943 and replaced that autumn.

Sarafis, (Maj. Gen.) Stefanos [Saraphis, Stephanos]. *Greek Resistance Army: The Story of ELAS.* Tr. and abr. by Marion Pascoe. London: Birch Books, 1951. Published in Greece in 1946, this English version has been called "a quite arbitrary abridgment, done along Leftist lines."


Spencer, Floyd A. *War and Postwar Greece: An Analysis Based on Greek Writings.* Washington: Library of Congress, 1952. This extremely valuable work takes the form of a series of bibliographic essays and is based very much on the use of Greek texts, although writings in other languages are also commented upon. Spencer frequently summarizes the authors' major findings or theses.

Stavrianos, L. S. *Greece: American Dilemma and Opportunity.* Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952. Almost half of this book is concerned with the resistance during World War II; on the whole, the author looks with disfavor on the "old order" in Greece, regards British policy there as unworkable, and appears to view EAM/ELAS as the last hope of Greece.


Woodhouse, C[harles] M. *Apple of Discord: A Survey of Recent Greek Politics in Their International Setting.* London: Hutchinson & Co., 1948. Woodhouse's book is not a memoir in the usual sense, but a study of the political aspects of the resistance. The author makes full use of his special experience and knowledge as commander of the Allied Military Mission from the fall of 1943 to June 1944. Unfortunately there is very little in this account on Greek guerrilla operations or German counterinsurgency.
Xydis, Stephen G. *The Economy and Finances of Greece Under the Occupation.* New York: Greek Government Office of Information. [1945?]. Xydis' report specified the economic troubles Greece experienced during the occupation and shows how these problems were multiplied by occupation policies and guerrilla warfare.