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THE GERMAN INVASION OF THE BALKANS
AND ITS EFFECT ON BARBAROSSA

By

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B. A. Montana State University, 1958

Presented

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Of

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1965

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PREFACE

During the Spring of 1940, the armies of Adolph Hitler had subjugated in rapid succession Denmark, Norway, The Netherlands, Belgium, and France. To many observers the British Isles would obviously be the Fuehrer's next target. Yet, in spite of the Germans having drawn up elaborate plans for the invasion of England, the Nazi "jackboots" never crossed the Channel. Many factors appeared to play a part in turning Hitler away from this precarious operation, a few of which can be definitely identified: (1) the British fleet still ruled the high seas in spite of its heavy losses to German U-boats and bombers, (2) the Germans were unsuccessful in winning control of the air over the British Isles, (3) "the English Channel was a very good anti-tank obstacle,"¹ (4) the determination of the English people prodded on by Winston Churchill to resist the Nazi juggernaut to the bitter end, and (5) the Soviet menace that loomed ever larger across the German eastern horizon.

¹The phrase was used by General Maxime Weygand shortly after the fall of France. See: C. E. Black and E. C. Helmreich, Twentieth Century Europe (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), p. 655.

Besides an implacable hatred toward the Soviet state, the Fuehrer had other good reasons to be leery of the "Russian bear." While the German armies had been operating in France, the Soviet colossus had transferred the status of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia from "spheres of influence" to states of the Soviet Union. Bessarabia and Bucavina were also incorporated into "mother Russia." Future trade between Yugoslavia and Russia was provided for in an agreement between these two Slav states at a time when the former was already "one hundred percent at the disposal of the Axis."² The Communist parties were gaining support in the Balkans, raw material shipments from the Soviet Union were slowing down, while a rumored new invasion of Finland was scheduled for August 15, 1940.³ Moreover, the Fuehrer seemed to be convinced that the resolute attitude of the British was partially based on the hope that Russia would enter the war on their side. Thus the British had to either be diplomatically or militarily deprived of their "last remaining hope on the continent"⁴ while the German land armies were largely intact

²Generaloberst Franz Halder, "The Private War Journal of Generaloberst Frans Halder (Chief of the General Staff of the Supreme Command of the German Army, 1939-1942)." Released by the Office of the Chief Historian, Headquarters European Command; United States Army, 1950 (Mimeographed). Vol. VI., September 3, 1940.

³Ibid., August 21, 1940.

⁴Eric von Raeder, My Life. Trans. Henry W. Drexel (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute, 1960), p. 338.

and strong. After solving the Russian question the Germans could then convert many of their resources used for the maintenance of large ground forces to the navy and air force-- prerequisites for the final defeat of Britain and possibly the United States.⁵

Then on October 28, 1940, Mussolini's armies invaded Greece, undoubtedly against Hitler's wishes.⁶ The Italian armies were soon halted in the Greek mountain valleys and were even hurled back into Albania at several points. The British navy and air force lodged themselves in the strategic islands of Lemnos and Crete, thus constituting a threat to the Rumanian oil fields which provided much of the fuel for the German mechanized units. Moreover the British presence could possibly throw the whole Balkans into turmoil by building up anti-Axis sentiments in the area and possibly compromise Hitler's plans toward the Soviet union. Hence, the Fuehrer felt obliged to bail out his Axis partner. The subsequent Balkan Campaigns and their over-all effect on the German invasion of Russia commencing on June 22, 1941, is the major topic of this thesis.

The topic is especially challenging because of the conflict between various authors. Some, including

⁵Hitler was considering the United States as a possible and probable enemy as early as July 9, 1940. See: Halder, Vol. VI, July 9, 1940.

⁶Ibid., October 15, 1940, gives Hitler's desire of "not wanting any new theatres of war."

Winston Churchill and B. H. Liddell Hart,⁷ feel that the British decision to intervene in the Balkans forced a "second front" on the Germans prior to their invasion of Russia and probably played a decisive role in saving Russia from a possible defeat. They take the view that even though this British strategic move was largely abortive it had delayed the invasion of Russia, caused an added expenditure of men and equipment, and enlarged the area of responsibility for the Axis.

Conversely, other authors, including Heinz Guderian and Wladyslaw Anders,⁸ contend that the German diversion into the Balkans had little appreciable influence on the German campaign in Russia. These writers point out that the German casualties were relatively low in the Balkan campaigns and the expenditure of material and supplies insignificant. Many of this latter group further surmise that due to bad weather in Poland and western Russia during the Spring of 1941, the invasion of Russia would have had to be postponed anyway. These authors tend to blame the Fuehrer for the German defeat in Russia either through his policies on

⁷Winston S. Churchill, The Grand Alliance (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1950). Hereafter cited as The Grand Alliance; B. H. Liddell Hart, The German Generals Talk (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1948).

⁸Heinz Guderian, Panzer Leader. Trans. by Constantine Fitzgibbon (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1952); and Wladyslaw Anders, Hitler's Defeat in Russia (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1953). This latter source does not elaborate on the Balkan campaign but finds numerous other reasons for Hitler's defeat.

occupation and subjugation of the "Slav" areas, or because of the Fuehrer's command decisions--often in conflict with the strategic concepts of the German High Command. The long German supply lines and the Russian weather are also factors considered by this group but seem to be relegated to a role of lesser importance.

This study cannot hope to eliminate all conflicts over this phase of history. Even the facts available might be subject to various interpretations. Furthermore the unknown elements of intuition and duplicity that often permeated the Fuehrer's decisions cannot be measured with total accuracy. However this author hopes by close examination and care in detail, to add dimension to Operation Marita and its consequential effects on Barbarossa.

THE GERMAN INVASION OF THE BALKANS

AND

ITS EFFECT ON BARBAROSSA

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

(Hitler's Timetable, July 1940 to April 6, 1941)

In order better to understand the effect of the German-Balkan campaigns¹ on the German invasion of Russia commencing on June 22, 1941, it is necessary to place the Fuehrer's fateful decisions of 1940-1941, dealing with the above-mentioned military campaigns in a proper perspective. When did Hitler order the execution of the various Balkan campaigns? Finally, did the German invasion in the Balkans really bring about a postponement of the German invasion of Russia?

Numerous authors maintain that Hitler's irrevocable decision to invade Russia was made within several weeks after the surrender of France.² The reasons given for the Fuehrer taking this fateful step at this time vary among the several authors. Some maintain that Hitler was simply fulfilling his

¹The invasions of Greece, Yugoslavia, and Crete.

²Among the authors taking this point of view are: Gustav Hilger and Alfred Meyer in The Incompatible Allies, German-Soviet Relations 1918-1941 (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1953); and L. S. Stavrianos in The Balkans Since 1453 (New York: Rinehart and Co., Inc., 1958). The armistice was signed by the French on June 22, 1940.

promises presented in such earlier works as Mein Kampf and Hitler's "last will and testament"³ to provide agriculturally useful space in the east" for the German people. Others contend that the fateful decision was made by the Fuehrer because he sincerely believed that the defeat of the British could only be achieved by eliminating "their last hope on the continent," Russia. A few, considering the decision of July 31, as irrevocable, accept a little of both of the previous arguments as playing a role in helping the Fuehrer make up his mind.

The question, is not so much why as it is whether Hitler actually made an irrevocable decision on July 31, 1940. To this end, the records of July, 1940, and the subsequent events relating to German-Soviet relations must be examined.

As early as July 13, 1940, Hitler told his top generals in a conference at the Berghof that "England is beaten" and that her "persistent unwillingness to make peace was only to be explained by her hope of winning Russia to her side."⁴ On July 19, 1940, Halder noted in his war journal that "Russia's interest not to let us grow big is recognized."⁵

³Issued on November 5, 1937. The full text of this document can be found in: U.S., War Department, Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946-1948), Vol. III., pp. 295-305. Hereafter cited as Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression.

⁴Halder, Vol. VI, July 13, 1940.

⁵Ibid., July 19, 1940.

This is followed up on July 21 with Hitler's requesting Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch to study the "Russian problem" and submit plans for a possible German campaign against the Soviet Union.⁶ On July 22, Hitler informed Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel and General Alfred Jodl of his decision to invade Russia as early as the coming fall. Keitel and Jodl, according to the testimony of the latter, convinced Hitler that an invasion of Russia in the fall of that year was not only impractical but impossible. Hitler then accepted the idea of an invasion of Russia in the spring of 1941.⁷ Consequently on July 29, Jodl ordered the High Command Operations Staff to prepare outlines for an operation against Russia. That same day, Hitler told the then Colonel Walter Warlimont that "if it was not his decision it was his intention to wage war on Russia."⁸ Two days later, on July 31, toward the end of a conference on Operation Sea Lion,⁹ Hitler informed his top military commanders of his decision to invade the Soviet Union, concluding that:

⁶U.S., Department of the Army, The German Campaign in the Balkans (Spring 1941) and the Seizure of Crete (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1953), p. 1. Hereafter cited as The German Campaign in the Balkans.

⁷U.S., Adjutant General's Department, Trials of War Criminals before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals under the Control Council Law No. 10, October 1946 - April 1949 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1951-1952), Vol. X, pp. 955-956. Hereafter cited as Trials of War Criminals.

⁸Ibid., p. 956. Later Warlimont is promoted to general.

⁹Code name for the German invasion of England.

Russia is the factor on which Britain is relying the most . . . with Russia smashed, Britain's last hope will be shattered. Germany then will be master of Europe and the Balkans.

Decision: Russia's destruction must therefore be made a part of this struggle. Spring 1941.

The sooner Russia is crushed the better. . . . If we start in May '41, we would have five months to finish the job.¹⁰

Case Otto was the code name assigned to this project during its early stages. During the remainder of the summer and fall two different teams of staff officers worked out general plans for an invasion of Russia. According to the testimony of Field Marshal Friedrich Paulus, both general outlines were completed in November, 1940.¹¹

Thus it appears that Hitler had firmly made up his mind to invade the Soviet Union in July, 1940. Or does it? Some historians, even after reviewing the events during July, might not be so hasty with their final judgment. They might argue that Hitler needed troops in the east to protect his deteriorating frontiers from a "real" Soviet menace. This would enable the Fuehrer to deal with the Soviets from a position

¹⁰Halder, Vol. VI, July 31, 1940.

¹¹U.S., War Department, Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression: Opinion and Judgement (Washington: Office of the United States Chief of Counsel from Prosecution of Axis Criminality, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), p. 43. Hereafter cited as Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression: Opinion and Judgement.

of power, possibly the only way Stalin would listen.¹² If the Russians still refused to back down in the face of the rapid German buildup, Hitler could then fall back on his war plans. The sense of urgency, of course, had to be planted in the minds of the Fuehrer's generals. With many working toward the common goal of a German invasion of Russia, the desired results would more likely be forthcoming; but, the Fuehrer's decision of July 31, 1940, was not irrevocable.

There is much to be said in favor of this line of reasoning. The Russians, so it appears, were massing troops for an invasion of Rumania, and "Russian forces were reported to be allotted for operations against Finland as of 15 August."¹³ In the Fuehrer's opinion the Soviets were ready to "go with Bulgaria and Yugoslavia to the Straits, the Aegean, and the Adriatic."¹⁴ Hitler was not prepared to see the hated Soviets grow stronger at the expense of the interests of the Third Reich. The Fuehrer made this clear when he said:

"It is in our interest to maintain the status quo in the Balkans. In the Baltic too it is (to) our benefit to keep a situation which

¹²Note Hitler's letter to Mussolini on December 3, 1940, implying that Hitler did not expect trouble from Stalin as long as Germany remained strong in the east. Excerpts can be found in John A. Lukacs, The Great Powers and Eastern Europe (New York: American Book Co., 1953), p. 337.

¹³Halder, Vol. VI, August 12, 1940.

¹⁴Lukacs, p. 321.

might not embarrass our strategic position in the area.¹⁵

The "decision" of July therefore brought German troops to the deteriorating eastern frontiers, possibly saved Finland, and enabled Hitler to guarantee the territorial integrity of what was left of Rumania after the "Vienna Award."¹⁶ Furthermore the troops helped to emphasize the idea that Hitler felt that the proper place for the Russians was east of the Danube and out of the Balkans.

Moreover, as an indication that the Fuehrer had not yet entered a "one way street" as far as the Russians were concerned, one needs only to review his actions after the Tripartite Pact was signed between Germany, Japan, and Italy. Hitler was quick to point out that this "Pact" was not aimed at the Soviet Union and invited Russia to join the Axis in "dividing up the estate of defunct Britain."¹⁷

It was, so continues this line of reasoning, only after the Fuehrer became convinced that Stalin would neither leave the Balkans nor become engaged in the war against the British that Hitler decided once and for all that the Soviet Union had to be eliminated. This assurance was reached during

¹⁵Halder, Vol. VI, September 24, 1940.

¹⁶The Axis representatives meeting in Vienna toward the end of August, 1940, agreed to give Northern Transylvania to Hungary and Southern Dobruja to Bulgaria. Both of these countries thereby became indebted to the Axis.

¹⁷Halder, Vol. VI, September 30, 1940.

November, 1940, by the Fuehrer. It started with Hitler's meeting with Molotov, the Russian foreign minister, on November 12 (the same day the Fuehrer had issued a "directive" for the simultaneous invasion of Greece and Gibraltar) and concluded with Stalin's final reply on November 27, 1940. During this same period the Fuehrer wrote to Mussolini pleading with the latter to do everything in his power" to divert Russia's attention from the Balkans to the Near and Middle East."¹⁸

"Case Otto" had received little personal attention from the Fuehrer up to this point, according to the testimony of General Paulus, and was only revived as a major topic of discussion at the Fuehrer's military conferences after the attempted negotiations with the Soviets had proved fruitless.¹⁹ Soon after, on December 5, 1940, Hitler informed his military commanders that: "Preparations must get underway in accordance with our basic plan. Proposed date (for the invasion of Russia): End of May."²⁰

The Fuehrer followed this up on December 18, 1940, with his "irrevocable" directive, as some have claimed, for the invasion of Russia in order to "prevent its becoming a

¹⁸Lukas, p. 336.

¹⁹Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, Opinion and Judgement.

²⁰Halder, Vol. VI, December 5, 1940. (Italics, mine.)

possible danger on the continent later." According to this "Directive No. 21," which was issued to all top commanders, all "preparations" were to be completed "as of May 15, 1941."²¹

Even so there remain doubts as to whether this was the Fuehrer's final decision. The directive goes on to say:

It must be clearly understood that all orders to be given by the commanders in chief on the basis of this directive are precautionary measures in case Russia should change her present attitude toward us.²²

In spite of the Fuehrer's reservations, it is possible to conclude that the decision of December 18, 1940, was irrevocable. A definite time limit was established in spite of the testimony of Grand Admiral Eric Raeder to the contrary.²³ Case Barbarossa, as the projected German invasion of Russia was now called, was being closely followed by the top German commanders. Field Marshal Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb on February 5, 1941, informed his top subordinates that all preliminary work must be completed "so that an attack on Russia is possible from May 16, onward."²⁴

²¹Mueller-Hillebrand, Das Heer, 1933-1945 (Darmstadt: E. S. Mittler & Sohn, 1954), Vol. II, p. 86. Hereafter cited as Das Heer. (Italics, mine.)

²²Trials of War Criminals, Vol. X, pp. 959-960.

²³Raeder claimed in My Life, that the 18 December directive "contained no such deadline date or prospective time for the operation to begin. It was just a precautionary measure." P. 337.

²⁴Trials of War Criminals, Vol. X, pp. 971-972.

In the meantime, on October 28, 1940, Mussolini had thrust his blunt sword into Greece. Hitler at first had been so angry at this Fascist move that he threatened to "let the Italians do it themselves" in spite of the fact that the Italian drives bogged down in the Greek mountain valleys.²⁵ By November 4, the Fuehrer had become far more realistic. The British had already established themselves on Crete and Lemnos while further threatening to establish bases at Salonika. Churchill was pleading for an anti-Axis coalition in the area at the same time.²⁶ It was rumored also that the Russians were offering the Greeks aid.²⁷ The whole affair threatened to throw the Balkans into a flux which could only brew an ill wind for the Axis and possibly force the Fuehrer to compromise his plans for an "eastern settlement."

Hitler's first counter stroke was to move his air defense service to southern Bulgaria through an agreement with the Bulgar state.²⁸ He then contemplated sending three German divisions to Albania but dismissed the idea for fear the move might cause the Greeks to ally themselves completely

²⁵ Halder, Vol. VI, November 1, 1940.

²⁶ Ulrich von Hassel, The von Hassel Diaries, 1938-1944. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1947), November 11, 1940; Halder, Vol. VI, November 4, 1940.

²⁷ Lukacs, p. 348.

²⁸ Halder, Vol. VI, November 4, 1940.

with the British.²⁹ Instead, the Fuehrer decided to bring the pro-Axis countries of Hungary, Rumania, and Slovakia into the Tripartite Pact as Axis junior partners as soon as possible. Once this was accomplished, Hitler would then attempt to win over Bulgaria and Yugoslavia to the same "Pact" through relentless diplomatic and military pressure. The achievement of this goal would give the Germans favorable frontiers for later operations in Greece and would moreover tend to keep these countries out of any proposed anti-Axis coalition. Hitler, in the meantime, would keep up diplomatic relations with Greece, continue his buildup in Rumania, which had been going on since the Vienna Award of September 27, and make plans to meet the new British challenge in the Mediterranean.

In regard to the latter, Hitler on November 12, 1940, issued "Directive 18": "If necessary," a German armored division would be sent to North Africa "to bolster the weakened Axis position in the area." Also "Gibraltar will be taken and the Straits closed" with the aid of Francisco Franco. The German troops in the east were to continue to be reinforced according to plan and "an army assembled to march into Greek Thrace by January if the need should arise."³⁰

While he was fruitlessly trying to convince the Soviets

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰German Campaign in the Balkans, pp. 4-5.

that their natural "Lebensraum expansion" should be out of the Balkans and toward the Persian Gulf, the Fuehrer on November 18, tried to talk King Boris of Bulgaria into joining the Axis.³¹ At the same time more German troops were sent into Rumania "in order to build a reservoir of forces there." On November 20 Hungary announced its adherence to the Tripartite Pact; Rumania likewise signed on November 23; and Slovakia became an Axis partner on November 25.

In the first days of December, after concluding that Stalin "was a cold-blooded blackmailer," Hitler stopped all preparations for an invasion of Britain until "after Russia has been crushed."³²

Then on December 5, 1940, after a review of Case Otto, the Fuehrer called for details on the earlier proposed operations against Greece. He was informed that the completed plans for the German invasion of Greece, using Bulgaria as a base, would not be ready until the middle of December; but that an invasion of Greece could not possibly take place before the beginning of March "since the assembly would require seventy or eighty days." It was further assumed by the German General Staff that the campaign would last approximately four weeks. The forces used in the Greek campaign would require at least another four weeks for re-fitting and

³¹Lukacs, p. 349.

³²Halder, Vol. VI, December 2, 1940.

redeployment before they would be available for an invasion of Russia.³³ Hitler conceded, so it seems, and, as mentioned previously, fixed the time for the invasion of Russia for the "end of May, 1941."

This was followed on December 13, 1940, just five days prior to Hitler's "Barbarossa directive," with "Directive No. 20," establishing Operation Marita or the German proposed invasion of Greece. According to the outline of Marita, a German task force was to be formed in Rumania "ready to thrust across Bulgaria and occupy 'Greek Thrace' as soon as weather and political conditions would allow. A maximum of twenty-four divisions was to be committed, and "these were to be ready to use in a new undertaking as soon as the operation was completed."³⁴ No specific date was mentioned in the "directive," but on December 20, 1940, Hitler fixed the probable invasion of Greece for March 6, 1941, which caused Halder to note that "we have five days delay so far."³⁵

As the new year opened, Bulgarian Premier Bogdan Filov visited Berlin and was offered Western Thrace and the Greek port of Salonika if the Bulgars would join the Tripartite Pact. On January 3, 1941, Filov agreed that his country

³³Halder, Vol. VI, December 5, 1940; German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 6. Also see: Allen Bullock's Hitler, A Study in Tyranny (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), p. 574.

³⁴Halder, Vol. VI, December 13, 1940; German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 6; and Bullock, p. 574.

³⁵Halder, Vol. VI, December 20, 1940.

would become an Axis partner "but only after German troops enter the country." Almost at the same time, the Russians warned "that it would consider the appearance of foreign armed forces in the territory of Bulgaria and the vicinity of the Straits as a violation of the security interests of the U.S.S.R."³⁶ To emphasize the point, Soviet troops were reported moving into Bessarabia. Hitler reacted on January 8-9, at a conference at the Berghof, by verbally lashing the Russians and promised to "settle the continental issue as soon as possible." He then ordered two and one-half divisions to be ready for service in Albania if necessary.³⁷ Britain, as anticipated, now moved to counter the Fuehrer's plans. Churchill again approached the Greeks for more joint co-operation and British participation on the mainland. The Greeks were cautious. They still retained hope that Hitler would not interfere in their "private war" with the Italians. Yugoslavia and Turkey at the same time spurned all offers of a British alliance coupled with British assistance.³⁸

The Fuehrer meanwhile, on January 19, fixed the date for the German entry into Bulgaria for February 28 and the joining of that country to the Axis on March 1, in spite of

³⁶U.S., Department of State, Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-41, Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Office (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), p. 268.

³⁷Bullock, p. 575.

³⁸Ibid.; The Grand Alliance, p. 173.

the fact that the head of the Marita task force, Field Marshal Sigmund List, did not think his air arm could meet the deadline. But the German movement of troops for assembly begun during the first week in February, and on February 8, a secret agreement was reached between Field Marshal List and the Bulgarian General Staff for the entrance of the German troops into Bulgaria later in the month.⁴⁰

The Greeks, possibly seeing the hand-writing on the wall, now were more agreeable to the idea of British troops participating on the mainland but "only after German troops had entered Bulgaria." The Turks and the Yugoslavs were again approached by the British, and again proved evasive.⁴¹

Hitler now decided that it was time to eliminate Yugoslavia as a potential threat to the German plans on the grounds that her officer corp and army were "totally unreliable" and her professed neutrality was not to be trusted.⁴² Thereby on February 14, the Yugoslav prime minister and foreign minister answered a summons to meet with the Fuehrer at Berchtesgaden.

During the course of the conversations that followed, Hitler offered the Yugoslavs, in the event of German operations against Greece, a promise that Axis soldiers would not

⁴⁰William Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950), p. 833.

⁴¹Lukacs, p. 362.

⁴²Halder, Vol. VI, March 5, 1941.

cross the Yugoslav frontier. The Yugoslavs in return would allow the Germans the use of certain railroads for supply purposes and would join the Tripartite Pact. The Fuehrer also left the impression that he fully expected the Yugoslaves to comply to these demands. German motorized units were at the same time sent speeding toward the Yugoslav frontier.⁴³

While Yugoslavia was left to ponder her fate, the Fuehrer moved to strengthen his eastern frontiers from possible Soviet intervention on behalf of its little Slavic brother. Hitler, on February 22, requested Count Friedrich Werner von Schulenburg and his staff in Moscow to let it be "known in an impressive manner" that "there were 880,000 troops in Rumania" and behind these troops "inexhaustible reserves" in Germany.⁴⁴

Hitler's Marita timetable was meanwhile encountering difficulties. Originally in December, the Germans had planned to cross the Bulgarian frontier "not before January 30."⁴⁵ The date now was established for February 28. The German General Staff had estimated that after the German entrance into Bulgaria the further deployment of the ground troops would take approximately a week and the buildup of

⁴³The Grand Alliance, p. 159.

⁴⁴Shirer, p. 822; Lukacs, p. 360.

⁴⁵Halder, Vol. VI, December 20, 1940.

the air force and supplies a little longer. Under these circumstances the deadline of March 6, for Marita could not possibly be met.⁴⁶ Regardless, the Barbarossa timetable "from May 16, onward" was adhered to by the German military.⁴⁷

The successful German entrance into Bulgaria took place as scheduled, and, on March 1, the Bulgars joined the Tripartite Pact. Hitler now moved once again to bring Yugoslavia into the Axis camp. This time, on March 4, Prince Regent Paul was invited to Berchtesgaden. The former German demands were repeated and, as an added inducement for a commitment, Hitler offered the Yugoslavs the Greek port of Salonika.⁴⁸ On March 5, Prince Paul caved in and verbally promised the Fuehrer that Yugoslavia would comply with the Axis demands.

It soon became obvious that the Regent could not deliver. Winston Churchill had promised to send a specified number of British troops that began arriving on the Greek mainland March 5.⁴⁹ This greatly heartened the anti-Axis sentiments in Yugoslavia and the military, rallying around

⁴⁶This interpretation is substantiated by Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, Vol. VI, p. 879; Halder, Vol. VI, January 28, 1941, and February 17, 1941.

⁴⁷Note footnote number twenty-four.

⁴⁸This is not new. Salonika was offered to the Yugoslavs as early as November 18, 1940. It was also promised to Bulgaria. Neither got it.

⁴⁹The Grand Alliance, p. 74 and p. 220.

the leader of the opposition, Dušan Simovic, flatly refused to concede to the Fuehrer's demands.

Prince Paul was again summoned by Hitler on March 15, 1941, and was served with the Fuehrer's final lenient offer. Yugoslavia was either expected to comply with Hitler's wishes or be wiped out. Paul was kept a virtual prisoner for four days. He was allowed to return home on March 19. The next day the Yugoslav government decided to join the Tripartite Pact.

Meanwhile the German military leadership was complaining about the delay apparently caused by the Fuehrer's machinations. The Barbarossa time schedule appeared very much in danger in spite of the fact that as early as March 7, Hitler had decided to keep six infantry divisions in Rumania out of the twenty-three earmarked for Bulgaria and the invasion of Greece.⁵⁰

Finally on March 17, the Fuehrer made a momentous decision. "The forces to be used in the operation (Marita) were to be written off from the buildup for Barbarossa."⁵¹ Also, "all new panzers now being produced in Germany were not to be used in the initial offensive against the Soviet Union." Then after allaying fears of possible Russian intervention, he ordered the German General Staff to be prepared

⁵⁰German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 20.

⁵¹Halder, Vol. VI, March 17, 1941. (Italics, by the author.)

to drive the British out of Greece. The operation was to be carried out with the "objective of gaining air domination over the eastern Mediterranean" and would "perhaps even include the Peloponnese." The attack was to be launched "soon after Yugoslavia joined the Axis." This would take place presumably around March 25. The operation was, of course, to "be carried out with maximum speed."⁵²

On March 24, two representatives of the Yugoslav government slipped out of Belgrade through a suburban railway station and boarded a train bound for Vienna. The next day, in the presence of Hitler and Joachim von Ribbentrop, Yugoslavia joined the Tripartite Pact.⁵³ Hitler was highly pleased and related at the time "that this would facilitate his attack on Greece."⁵⁴

The Yugoslav ministers had no sooner returned to Belgrade when they, the government, and the Prince Regent were overthrown on the night of March 26-27, by a popular uprising led by a number of top Yugoslav air force officers supported by the army. The youthful heir to the throne, Peter, was declared king. The new regime of Prime Minister Dušan Simovic immediately offered to sign a nonaggression pact with Germany.⁵⁵ It appeared quite obvious to Berlin

⁵²Ibid.; Das Heer, Vol. II, p. 64.

⁵³The Grand Alliance, p. 160.

⁵⁴Shirer, p. 823.

⁵⁵Ibid.

that the new government was not going to accept the Tripartite Pact.

Hitler was in a rage. He immediately called his military leaders to a conference in Berlin on March 27. The Belgrade coup, he said, "had endangered both Marita and Barbarossa." Therefore he was determined to "destroy Yugoslavia militarily and as a nation." The blow against the state would be "carried out with military harshness" in a "lightning-like undertaking." Hermann Goering was ordered "to destroy Belgrade in attacks by waves."⁵⁶ At the same conference the Fuehrer issued "Directive No. 25" for the invasion of Yugoslavia.⁵⁷ Generals Keitel and Jodl were instructed to work out the plans that same evening. Then came his fateful announcement: "The beginning of the Barbarossa operation will have to be postponed up to four weeks."⁵⁸

Within twenty-four hours "Action Punishment" (as the Fuehrer called the projected invasion of Yugoslavia) and "Operation Marita" were put in a closer working relationship with one another.⁵⁹ The final revised High Command directive was sent to the various German services on March 30. The

⁵⁶The minutes of this meeting can be found in Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, Vol. IV, pp. 275-278.

⁵⁷Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, Vol. VI, pp. 938-939.

⁵⁸Ibid. (The underlining is contained in the minutes.)

⁵⁹Ibid.

German military was allowed approximately five days to prepare itself for the new task.⁶⁰

The question to be answered from the preceding evidence, and without involving other factors, is whether the Balkan campaigns as planned by the Germans up to April 6, caused a delay in the execution of Barbarossa. There is no doubt that they did.

Some may argue that a successful German invasion of Russia was dependent on a secure Balkan flank and that therefore the Balkan campaign must be considered as a part of the larger Barbarossa plan. Aside from a look at the map, the close relationship of the "directives" establishing both invasions in December, 1940, can be offered as evidence. This would be very difficult to dispute; but it must be remembered that the Fuehrer "wrote off" the forces to be used in Operation Marita from Operation Barbarossa on March 17, 1941. Therefore it can be assumed that it was not Marita that caused the postponement but Hitler's decision to invade Yugoslavia. The German military, from all accumulated evidence, was, up to the Fuehrer's decision of March 28, still following the timetable for the invasion of Russia "as of May 16, onward." The "crushing" of Yugoslavia may have been necessary for Axis security on the southern flank but

⁶⁰Some German contingents were allowed more time however. See chapter on "Re-allocation of German Forces for the Invasion of Greece and Yugoslavia." Also see: Trials of War Criminals, Vol. XV, p. 387.

it is debatable. It can also be argued that the Yugoslav problem was created by Hitler himself trying to force the Yugoslavs into the Axis camp.

From all evidence, the Nazi army was poised to strike into Greece anytime after March 10. Assuming that the estimates of the German planning units were accurate, four weeks were needed by the Germans in order to bring the Greek campaign to a successful conclusion and an additional four weeks were to be allotted in order to re-deploy the German divisions from Operation Marita into Operation Barbarossa. Thus if the German attack on Greece had taken place by mid-March, the German attack on Russia could have taken place anytime after mid-May, 1941.

CHAPTER II

RE-ALLOCATION OF GERMAN FORCES AND THE YUGOSLAV-GREEK-BRITISH POSITION IN THE BALKANS

Prior to the Fuehrer's decision definitely to include Yugoslavia in his march of conquests, the German Twelfth Army in Bulgaria, commanded by Field Marshal Sigmund List, consisted of five panzer divisions (4th, 5th, and 6th), one motorized infantry division (60th), eight infantry divisions (46th, 50th, 64th, 72d, 73d, 76th, 198th, and 294th), one reinforced SS regiment (Adolph Hitler), and one regiment of infantry (125th), for a total of seventeen divisions and two regiments.¹

The primary purpose of these German forces was to invade Greece and to eliminate a possible British threat on the Balkan flank. In regard to the latter, the troops were also expected to act as a military lever on Turkey and Yugoslavia--to keep them out of any possible anti-Axis coalition. By March 17, the Turkish threat had dissipated and Yugoslavia was preparing to sign the Tripartite Pact. However the Barbarossa deadline of mid-May was drawing near. On that day, therefore, Hitler decided that all German troops preparing to engage in

¹The SS Adolph Hitler was also referred to as a light division, having a complement of over 8,000 men. The units can be found in Das Heer, Vol. II, p. 155.

Greece would have to be withdrawn from the Barbarossa schedule.² At the same time, the German forces in Bulgaria were to be reduced. Three infantry divisions (46th, 76th, and 198th) were ordered to entrain for Rumania as soon as possible. These divisions were to be followed by two panzer divisions (8th and 11th), and one motorized division (60th) for re-deployment in Poland.³ General Ewald von Kleist, who was originally scheduled to lead the German armored divisions in Greece, was also ordered to report to Poland as soon as the arrangements for the re-deployment of the units under his command were completed.⁴ One panzer division was to remain on the Bulgarian-Turkish border during the German operations against Greece, but was to be re-integrated into Barbarossa as soon as possible. All other German divisions assigned to the Twelfth Army were to be used to drive the British from Greece. Upon completion of this task, the divisions were to be re-fitted and available as reserves for other "theatres of war."⁵ The German troops in Greece were to be supported

²Halder, Vol. VI, March 17, 1941.

³Das Heer, Vol. II, pp. 84-85; also German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 89. The latter source only mentions the entraining of the infantry divisions.

⁴German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 39.

⁵Das Heer, Vol. II, pp. 84-85. Where these other theatres of war were to be located can only be conjectured. But with the Balkan theatre still very uncertain he was definitely not committing them to the pending Russian campaign at this time.

by planes of the Fourth Air Force consisting of at least 155 fighters and reconnaissance planes stationed chiefly in Rumania and 355 bombers and dive bombers available in Rumania and Bulgaria.⁶

"Action 25," or the additional invasion of Yugoslavia,⁷ required a number of changes not previously considered. The Fuehrer had ordered Yugoslavia "to be crushed with all possible speed." Also "all the forces available" under List were to be used except "approximately one division and sufficient anti-aircraft elements." The Luftwaffe was to destroy Belgrade with "wave after wave" of bombers, lend tactical support for the ground troops, and "destroy all ground installations of the Yugoslav air force." To further implement the directive, a strong force was to be assembled "immediately" in either Austria or Hungary.⁸

Reichs Marshal Hermann Goering, the head of the Luftwaffe (who was present when the directive was issued) at once began making preparations to carry out his broadened assignment. For the next ten days approximately 600 additional fighters, bombers, dive-bombers, and reconnaissance planes were transferred to the new operation. The ground crews and aircraft came from the Luftwaffe units stationed in North Africa,

⁶German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 29.

⁷Later included in Operation Marita.

⁸Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, Vol. IV, pp. 275-278.

France, Sicily, Germany, and the build-up areas in East Prussia and Poland.⁹ The bombers began converging on fields mainly in Austria and Bulgaria, while most of the fighters found temporary homes at Arad, Deva, Turnu, and Severen in western Rumania. In addition, Goering had General Wolfram von Richthofen transferred to the project.¹⁰ Richthofen, whose Eighth Air Corps had supported the ground troops with such success in France was expected to repeat the performance in Greece and Yugoslavia. The general would be subordinate to General Alexander Loehr, commander of the Fourth Air Force. Goering, meanwhile, prepared to move to a mountain headquarters a few miles southwest of Wiener Neustadt, where, he felt, he would be in better position to view and advise the entire air operation.¹¹

The German planning unit, directed by Field Marshal von Brauchitsch,¹² agreeing with Hitler's views realized that speed and surprise were of the utmost importance in successfully carrying out the combined operation. The reports from Yugoslavia indicated that a great deal of confusion existed following Simovic's successful "coup." The

⁹Pieced together from various sources, see: Halder, Vol. VI, May 12, 1941; The Grand Alliance, p. 174; and German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 39.

¹⁰Halder, Vol. VI, May 12, 1941; and May 13, 1941.

¹¹German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 38.

¹²Commander-in-chief of the German Army.

Yugoslav government was hesitating to take decisive action such as more co-operation with the Greeks and British for fear of antagonizing Hitler; inter-service rivalry was at the same time disrupting the high command; and a few Croat units were near rebellion. Moreover the Yugoslav army was deployed disadvantageously for the defense of the country-- a fact that could only be corrected over a long period of time because of the general lack of transportation facilities (roads, railroads, and motor vehicles) within the state.¹³ Even so, serious problems could transpire for the Axis if the Yugoslavs took it on themselves to attack the Italian rear in Albania, as already suggested by Winston Churchill,¹⁴ and/or if the Yugoslav army would be able to tie up with the Anglo-Greek forces through the Bitolj Gap or the Vardar River Valley.

In order to meet the new contingencies, List's forces in Bulgaria were to be divided into three main groups for the combined attack. The left wing would be deployed southward along the southwestern Bulgarian border toward the Aegean Sea. This wing was to directly engage the

¹³Halder, Vol. VI, April 4, 1941, predicts a rapid collapse of the Yugoslav state. Though the Yugoslav third and fifth armies guarded over 100 miles of border area opposite Bulgaria and Greece, only one infantry division was held in reserve at Skoplje. The rest were committed almost exclusively to the border environs.

¹⁴The Grand Alliance, p. 172-173, in a note from Churchill to General Sir John Dill in Belgrade on April 1, 1941.

Anglo-Greek armies. The entire force to be committed in this area consisted of one panzer division (2d), two mountain divisions (5th and 6th), three infantry divisions (50th, 72d, and 164th), and one infantry regiment (125th).¹⁵ The group would again be sub-divided into three corps. One corps of infantry would attack the Metaxia Line in Greek Thrace. Two other corps would drive on Salonika by divergent routes. Leading the panzers and motorized units on the drive to Salonika would be Lieutenant General Franz Boeme. All three corps were scheduled to "jump off" on the morning of April 6, 1941.

List's center would be deployed facing Skoplje on the vital Vardar River, and Prelip, the important railroad junction just south of Skoplje. This force was to be made up of one panzer division (9th), one reinforced SS regiment (Adolph Hitler), and one infantry division (73d). This single corps was to be commanded by Lieutenant General Georg Stume. The SS regiment was to drive on Prelip, capture the city, and then proceed to Menastir opposite the Bitolj Gap. The 9th panzer division was to capture Skoplje, then split into two columns. The smaller column would head for the Albanian border and tie in with the Italian army. The larger would wheel and head for the Bitolj Gap to aid the Adolph Hitler regiment. The infantry division would meanwhile secure the

¹⁵Das Heer, Vol. II, p. 155.

ground in the rear. Since speed was so essential, the corps was scheduled to move out on a "flying start" at 0530 on the morning of April 6, 1941.¹⁶

The right wing, to be deployed east of Sofia, Bulgaria, would be poised to annihilate the strong Yugoslav forces concentrated in the Piroet-Leskovac sector, capture Nis, then move up the Morava Valley toward Belgrade, the Yugoslav capital. Exceptional initial enemy resistance was expected by this group; thus to insure success the force had to be strong. The right wing was made up of one corps and one panzer group. The force was to consist of two panzer divisions (5th and 11th), one mountain division (4th), one motorized infantry division (60th), and one infantry division (294th).¹⁷ General Ewald von Kleist was to lead the panzers against the Yugoslav concentrations. The column was ordered to limit itself to deceptive probes and limited objective attacks until April 8, in order to allow time to complete the buildup.¹⁸

To complete the re-allocation of the units of the Twelfth Army in Bulgaria, one panzer division (16th) was assigned the task of guarding the Bulgarian-Turkish border; and three infantry divisions (46th, 76th, and 198th), that

¹⁶Ibid., p. 155; and German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 86.

¹⁷Das Heer, Vol. II, p. 155.

¹⁸German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 32.

were now ordered to detrain, were to remain in Bulgaria as reserves.¹⁹

Farther north, in the vicinity of Timisoara, Rumania, a separate panzer group was to be assembled. The units, all SS, were to be transferred from southern Rumania. The Corps would consist of one division (Das Reich), and infantry regiment (Gross Deutschland), and a brigade (Hermann Goering).²⁰ This group, in the original plan, was not designated to take part in the invasion of Yugoslavia except through the conducting of limited objective operations against bridges, roads, railroads, and railroad bridges. The major task of the units would be to guard the Rumanian-Yugoslav frontier and the important Luftwaffe fields in the vicinity.²¹

In southwestern Hungary along the Drava River, and in the Brück-Graz area of Austria, the German Second Army was to be assembled. The army would consist of two panzer divisions (8th and 14th), one motorized infantry division (16th), one mountain division (1st), one light infantry division (101st), four infantry divisions (79th, 125th, 132d, and 133d), and one frontier guard unit (538th), for a

¹⁹Das Heer, Vol. II, p. 155.

²⁰Ibid., p. 156. Originally they were part of Kleist's First Panzer Group.

²¹German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 33.

total of nine divisions and one unit.²² The force, to be commanded by General Maximilian von Weichs, would be divided into four corps units and three columns for the Yugoslav invasion. Two combined columns, to be led in the initial attack by the two panzer divisions, were to be poised to strike across the Drava River from Hungary. After the Drava had been successfully forded and the Yugoslav defense in the area neutralized, the panzers, assisted by the motorized infantry division would drive on Zagreb, the old Croatian capital. The second column, consisting mainly of infantry, would split from the first and wheel to the south striking toward Belgrade by way of the Drava and the Danube. A third column, consisting of one mountain division and the frontier guard unit would hold the Austrian frontier until the panzers were well on their way to Zagreb. Then if the Yugoslav defense lines along the Austrian frontier showed signs of disintegrating, this column too would move on the Croatian capital.²³

In the original plan, the Second Army was ordered to withhold its major attack until April 12, a full six days after operations were to begin in the south.²⁴ This would

²²Das Heer, Vol. II, p. 156

²³Gained from various sources. Note especially: German Campaign in the Balkans, pp. 31-32.

²⁴Ibid., p. 32.

allow time for the buildup to be completed in the north, stretch the Yugoslav nerves as they watched their rear disintegrate, and permit an anticipated Croat rebellion to take place among the Yugoslav military units.²⁵

A German reinforced engineering battalion attached to the German military mission in Bulgaria was to be assigned the task of capturing and holding the Iron Gates on the Danube River near the Yugoslav-Rumanian border.²⁶ The Yugoslavs were to be prevented from blasting and filling the narrow gorge at all costs.

While most of List's forces preparing to strike into Greece were in the vicinity of their deployment areas, those designated to attack Yugoslavia were not. Stume's corps, preparing to move into southern Yugoslavia across the Vardar River, had to be moved from fifty to one hundred miles to their new deployment areas. In most cases they were able to provide their own transportation to the "jump off" area, but, because of their difficult task, every precaution was taken not to tire out this corps before the invasion. A shuttling

²⁵Halder, Vol. VI, March 20, 1941, discusses the Croat's pro-German sentiments.

²⁶German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 44. The Iron Gates are a narrow gorge where the Danube cuts its way between the Balkan Mountains and the Transylvanian Alps. Here a series of rapids stretching for two miles formerly prevented navigation. This was remedied by blasting during the decade 1890-1900.

service made up of a minimum of motor vehicles appeared to be used whenever possible.²⁷ The German divisions preparing to advance in the direction of Belgrade from the south were much harder pressed. In order to meet their deadline, they were forced to use every available vehicle in the area including those of the 16th Panzer division stationed on the Turkish border and others borrowed from units in Rumania.²⁸ The 60th Motorized Infantry division was so exhausted from carrying men and supplies to the new deployment area that the German High Command decided to hold the division in reserve.²⁹

The Second Army, being formed in Austria and Hungary, also had numerous transportation problems. The Fuehrer wanted to keep the buildup as quiet as possible so, therefore, no maximum performance schedule was to be used outside Austria.³⁰ Yet, every one of the nine divisions in the Second Army had to be transferred from other areas or detoured from other destinations. The 8th Panzer, 16th Motorized, and 79th Infantry divisions were to be shipped by rail from France to Austria; the 14th Panzer was to arrive in Austria by rail from Poland; the 125th, 132d, and 183d infantry divisions were to be detoured from their journey to East Prussia and brought by

²⁷German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 32.

²⁸German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 32.

²⁹Ibid., p. 39.

³⁰Ibid., p. 43.

rail to Austria; the 101st Light and 1st Mountain divisions were to be furnished motor transportation from Czechoslovakia and France respectively.³¹ The obstacles could have been even greater if the Germans did not have a comprehensive and carefully worked out railroad and motor transport schedules for the Barbarossa buildup.³² The postponement of the invasion of Russia by the Germans allowed readily available vehicles and trains to be transferred for service in the Balkan campaign on very short notice. Only the various corps head-quarter units were expected to furnish their own transportation to the Second Army deployment areas. On the other hand, the German buildup near Timisoara would be far less complicated. The SS units were selected partially on the grounds that they could furnish their own transportation.³³

The Luftwaffe pilots also, in most cases, provided their own transportation, while many of the bombers brought a few ground crew personnel with them. Many others attached to the ground crews had to be provided transportation, as did separate engineering battalions and quartermaster units.

³¹Ibid., p. 48, charts the origin, type of transportation, and destination of each division. Also see the testimony of Reinhardt; Trials of War Criminals, Vol. X, p. 1047.

³²Churchill mentions upsetting this German transportation schedule in The Grand Alliance, p. 356.

³³Also because they were attached to List's First Panzer Group. Note their vehicle components in Das Heer, p. 77.

The problem of supplying the entire operation also had to be considered. The Germans previously had used the Danube as an avenue of supply for their forces in Rumania and Bulgaria and further were counting on the use of the Belgrade-Nis-Salonika railroad to supply their armies during the invasion of Greece.³⁴ Now the Germans were about to deprive themselves of both the river and the railroad for what they hoped would be a very short time. Fortunately the Germans had built up several large supply bases in Rumania prior to the Yugoslav "coup." Truck columns between these supply bases and List's Twelfth Army in Bulgaria had also been established but not on as large a scale as would be needed to support such a major operation as that pending,³⁵ in spite of the fact that the Bucharest-Sofia railroad helped share the burden. As more vehicles were assigned to the truck convoys in the south, the Germans in the north, in anticipation of events to come, assembled a number of barges at Vienna each loaded with 10,000 tons of supplies and fuel. They were destined for Belgrade where a supply base was to be established as soon as the German armies made it possible.³⁶ Several ships were also loaded at Rumanian Black Sea ports scheduled to sail for

³⁴Guenther Blumentritt, Von Rundstedt, The Soldier and the Man (London: Odhams Press Limited, 1952), p. 101.

³⁵German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 46.

³⁶Ibid.

Salonika as soon as it fell into German hands.³⁷ Railroad engineering troops and construction crews were reserved at the same time to restore the Belgrade-Nis-Salonika railroad at the earliest possible time.³⁸

With supplies somewhat limited, the troops of List's army were given orders not to waste or leave behind any ammunition. Each rifle-bearing soldier was to be given only a basic load for his weapon. The conservation of fuel was also stressed to the tank commanders.³⁹ The Twelfth Army organized mobile supply units along the Greek border that were to carry only the barest of essentials. The trucks were to be prepared to move right behind the German army as soon as the passes were secured.⁴⁰

Supplying the Second Army was not considered a grave problem. A major supply base had been established at Vienna in 1940 in anticipation of possible trouble in the Balkans due to Soviet interference at the time.⁴¹ Also good railroad connections and good road conditions existed in Austria and western Hungary. The only major problem seemed to be how to keep the supplies up to the armies after the Blitzkrieg had

³⁷Ibid., p. 44.

³⁸Ibid., p. 45.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 46.

⁴¹Ibid.

commenced.⁴²

The German units operating out of Rumania were not considered to have any major supply problems due to their limited participation. However, the Luftwaffe units here as well as on all fronts could conceivably run short on fuel, not because the fuel was not available but because of a general shortage of tanker trucks.⁴³

Even so, there can be no doubt that the Fuehrer's established timetable for the simultaneous invasion of Greece and Yugoslavia placed severe pressure on Germany's available transportation facilities; and in some cases the strain on the facilities made them unavailable for both Marita and Barbarossa.

As the German units were trying to meet their new deadlines in spite of the difficulties involved, the Fuehrer, after being assured that the Hungarians would at least tie down a number of Yugoslav troops along their frontiers, informed the Duce of the expected role of the Italian armies in the combined operation. The latter were to hold their front in Albania, protect their "rear" at all costs, and commence

⁴²Halder, Vol. VI, May 8, 1941, discussed this difficulty with Wagner.

⁴³This was one of their major problems during the entire Balkan campaign including the invasion of Crete. German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 129.

a drive down the Dalmatian coast coinciding with the drives of the German Second Army.⁴⁴

Meanwhile Field Marshal Brauchitsch and his staff were making arrangements to move to Wiener Neustadt to take personal command of the German armies involved in the entire operation. The Fuehrer and his entourage were preparing to do the same with similar thoughts in mind.⁴⁵

Opposed to this Axis plan of operation would be several formidable armies--at least on paper.

The Yugoslav army, after complete mobilization, would number thirty infantry divisions, ten reinforced brigades of almost division strength, and three cavalry regiments. In addition the Yugoslav Air Force consisted of well over 400 planes of all types.⁴⁶ When Hitler's directive was issued to the German military services on March 29, at least twenty-four complete Yugoslav divisions were already mobilized as well as many of the smaller units.⁴⁷ Almost all of these mobilized forces were stationed along the border areas adjacent to Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, Austria, Italy, and

⁴⁴A letter from Hitler to the Duce concerning the expected Italian task can be found in: Lukacs, p. 373.

⁴⁵Brauchitsch arrived at Wiener Neustadt on April 5, Hitler on April 6. German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 38.

⁴⁶"Armies of the World," Encyclopaedia Britannica Book of the Year, 1942, p. 68.

⁴⁷German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 37.

Albania. The frontier area between Greece and Yugoslavia was only lightly guarded because of the apparent friendship between the two countries. The Yugoslav Air Force was just in the process of modernizing, thanks to the pleas of Dušan Simovic, but many of the Yugoslav planes still dated back to pre-depression days.

The Greek army consisted of twenty and one-half divisions. Of this total fourteen divisions were in the Epirus section facing the Italian armies. The six and one-half divisions available in the east against the German threat consisted of one armored division (19th), five infantry divisions (7th, 12th, 14th, 18th, and 20th), and six separate battalions.⁴⁸

These Greek contingents would be assisted by British troops sent to Greece by Winston Churchill on March 5, 1941. These forces included three infantry divisions of the British Empire (New Zealand, 5th and 6th Australian), one British armored brigade (1st), and a Polish infantry brigade.⁴⁹

The Greek army units were poorly equipped with the 19th armored division made up mainly of captured Italian tanks. The British troops, on the other hand, were almost fully motorized, but their equipment was more suitable for desert

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 15.

⁴⁹The Grand Alliance, p. 220.

warfare than the steep mountain roads of Greece.⁵⁰ Furthermore, there was an acute shortage of tanks and anti-aircraft guns among the British as well as the Greek units.⁵¹ The Greek air force was nearly non-existent, while the British air power in Greece consisted of about 100 planes.⁵²

Probably the greatest fault among these allies armies that were about to oppose Hitler's Blitzkrieg was the sad lack of defensive co-operation and co-ordination. To be sure, almost a month before the Yugoslav "coup," the Anglo-Greek war leaders⁵³ worked out a plan based on the strategic concept of the total defense of Greece, but in the end much of the plan was abandoned. According to this plan three Greek divisions were to hold the Metaxis Line in Greek Thrace and Eastern Macedonia with the largest force stationed west of the Strimson River. When and if their position became untenable, these Greek divisions were to fall back in the general area of Salonika and the Vardar River, leaving small garrisons to check the German advance. They were then to tie-in with the Anglo-Greek defense positions extending from

⁵⁰German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 15.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²The Grand Alliance, p. 221, says 80 planes, reinforced in April; Encyclopaedia Americana, 9th ed., Vol. XXIX. p. 557, maintains there were over 100. Also see: Werner Baumbach, Life and Death of the Luftwaffe (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1949), p. 75.

⁵³Greek General Papagos and British Generals Dill and Wavell.

the Vermion mountain range to the Aliakhmon (Vistritsa) River, then along the Aliakhmon River to the Yugoslav border. This defense line was to be manned by at least "five good Greek divisions" and the forces of the British Empire. At least three of the five Greek divisions were to be assigned to the extreme British left flank. In the meantime, the Greek Epirus army was expected strategically to withdraw from Albania to fixed positions to their rear. The breach between the Greek Epirus army and the Anglo-Greek Vermion-Aliakhmon positions would then be filled by the three Greek divisions situated on the left flank. This latter force was expected to protect the Yugoslav-Greek frontier in the direction of the Bitolj Gap, and, thereby, prevent any hostile move through the "Gap" that might endanger the flanks of the Anglo-Greek positions or the rear of the Epirus Army.⁵⁴ When this joint plan was worked out the British and the Greeks had to consider Yugoslavia as a possible Axis partner.

However, as it became more reasonable to assume that Yugoslavia was not going to permit German troops to cross their soil, and as the Greek armies became harder pressed in Albania, the Anglo-Greek plan underwent a few decisive changes. Even before the forces of the British Empire began arriving in Greece, Alexander Papagos, the Greek general, informed their commander, General Maitland Wilson, that he could only

⁵⁴For parts of this plan see: The Grand Alliance, pp. 99-101, and pp. 220-221; and German Campaign in the Balkans, pp. 15-16.

afford to give the British three Greek divisions (including the 19th armored) and several unattached battalions.⁵⁵ Apparently Papagos also revised the defense of Greek Thrace and Eastern Macedonia. Three Greek divisions would defend the area as previously agreed, but two of these divisions would be located east of the Strimson River.⁵⁶ The general further spoke of the impossibility of a strategic withdrawal from Albania.⁵⁷ Under these new circumstances only two Greek divisions and several battalions would have to guard the long breach between the Epirus Army and the British defensive positions. The British also, partially to placate the Greek general, agreed that the Greek 19th Armored division, although technically under British command, would be placed in reserve south of Lake Dojran. Here it would be able either to come to the assistance of the Greek armies along the Metaxis line, or be prepared to join the British defense forces.⁵⁸

Although the British were not pleased with the new allocation of the Greek units, there were reasons for general optimism among the Anglo-Greek forces after the Yugoslav "coup." It was felt by many that if Yugoslavia were attacked

⁵⁵German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 15.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Papagos claimed that the Greek Army did not have the ability for such a maneuver and the morale problem might create a disaster, The Grand Alliance, pp. 100-101.

⁵⁸German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 15.

she would be able to hold Yugoslav Macedonia because of its difficult terrain even if she were forced to abandon much of the Yugoslav north.⁵⁹ Moreover, a Yugoslav strike at the Italian rear in Albania might bring about the entire collapse of the Italian armies in that country and, of course, free the Greek Epirus army for duty elsewhere.

In retrospect, it is clear that if any of the British hopes materialized and as a result the German army was halted for a prolonged period in either Greece or Yugoslavia, Barbarossa in the spring or summer of 1941, would have been seriously jeopardized. The Germans not only had disrupted the Barbarossa time schedule by the shuffling of divisions and supplies for the combined invasion of Greece and Yugoslavia, but had committed or re-deployed six panzer divisions and over one thousand planes to be used in the operations.

Meanwhile joy and pride had turned to fear and inertia in Belgrade. The Yugoslav government refused to enter into any serious military discussions with the British and the Greeks--and the efficient German war machine girded itself for action.

⁵⁹The Grand Alliance, p. 221.

CHAPTER III

THE GERMAN INVASION OF GREECE AND YUGOSLAVIA

At 5:30 on the morning of April 6, 1941, the Balkan campaign began with a violent air bombardment of Belgrade, coinciding with Luftwaffe strikes on many of the major air fields in Greece and Yugoslavia. At the same time Stume's corps was executing its "flying start" with the 9th Panzer division driving toward Skoplje and the Adolph Hitler reinforced regiment moving on Stip, Yugoslavia. Both divisions encountered stiff resistance along the border area in spite of the surprise achieved. However, with the temporary aid of the 2d Panzer and 125th Regiment, the border environs were soon penetrated.¹ The Yugoslavs then offered only a sporadic defense.² Both primary objectives were attained the following day (April 7). On April 8, the Adolph Hitler regiment captured the important rail center at Prelip. Meanwhile, the 9th Panzer, after leaving a security force

¹For more about this division and regiment, see page 2 of this chapter.

²Behind the border defenses in southern Yugoslavia at the time there was only one division in reserve, that at Skoplje, German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 37.

at Skoplje and sending several of its battalions toward the Albanian border to tie-in with the Italian army, began a pivot toward Monastir, opposite the invaluable Bitolj Gap. Units of both German columns entered this Yugoslav city almost at the same time on April 9, 1941. The German 73d Infantry division was still far to the rear rounding up Yugoslav prisoners.³ Thus, probably the greatest fear of the British army in Greece had materialized. In just three days the Germans had effectively severed Greece from Yugoslavia and were in a position to drive down the flanks of the British defense positions behind the Vermion-Aliakhmon line.

List's right wing, meanwhile, was directly attacking Greece. Two German infantry divisions (50th and 164th) were driving in the direction of the Nestos River toward the Aegean Sea. At the same time, the 2d Panzer division, supported by an infantry regiment (125th), was crossing Yugoslav territory in order to give temporary relief to Stume's corps. During the first two days of the invasion, this panzer division remained on Yugoslav soil disorganizing the defenses and even being forced to repel a minor Yugoslav counterattack on April 7.⁴ Early in the morning of April 8, the panzer

³Due to the limited material available, information on this phase of the Balkan campaign was gained from many varying sources. Over 90,000 Yugoslav prisoners were taken by the Germans in this area of Yugoslavia, however, and the 73d Infantry division was late arriving at Monastir. See: German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 112.

⁴Ibid., p. 87, speaks of repelling the counterattack.

division crossed the Greek-Yugoslav border through the treacherous mountain passes west of Lake Dojran. The Greek 19th Armored division, already being "blasted" constantly by the Luftwaffe, was taken completely by surprise and in the ensuing struggle was annihilated by the German division.⁵ The panzer division, hardly waiting to catch its breath, wheeled and headed for the Greek port of Salonika, with advanced elements of the division entering the city largely unopposed the next day (April 9).

The remainder of Boeme's forces (5th and 6th Mountain and 72d Infantry) were at the same time, converging on Rupel's Gorge, a defensive position on the Metaxis Line. Motorized units of the 5th and 6th Mountain divisions reached Dojran on April 7, then wheeling southward headed toward the pass in hopes of forcing it. On their arrival, they found the pass heavily defended and decided to wait for reinforcements. When new contingents arrived, an attempt was made to force the gorge, but it was repulsed by heavy enemy fire. During the afternoon of April 8, the 6th Mountain division began an ascent of one of the high mountains rising adjacent to the gorge. Early the next morning they were on the other side and to the rear of the Anglo-Greek positions. The defenders were taken completely by surprise, and the German

⁵Ibid.

force soon after moved through the pass without any undue interference.⁶ This column too moved toward Salonika, reaching the city early in the morning of April 10. That same day the Germans secured the left bank of the Vardar River. Already on April 9, the Greek Second Army, holding the Metaxis Line in Greek Thrace and Eastern Macedonia, after a valiant struggle, but with the avenues of supply and retreat cut off by the Germans, had surrendered.

While the German armies were attacking from bases in southern Bulgaria, the Yugoslavs were suffering from a "war of nerves" as they sensed the attack from northern Bulgaria. German probes had already proved the weakness of several of their defensive positions, and the few Yugoslav reserves that were available were pulled up from the rear areas to shore up the line.⁷ Croat Regiments, at the same time were near mutiny,⁸ and the Luftwaffe was "blasting" all concentrations.⁹ On April 8, following a terrific artillery barrage, the German panzers rumbled forward. Picking several weak points in the Yugoslav line, the German tanks "punched

⁶The defenders considered the mountain, nearly 9,000 feet high, to be impassable so it was not defended, German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 88.

⁷This appears to be exactly what the Germans wanted them to do, Halder, Vol. VI, April 4, 1941.

⁸For the Croat general attitude, see: Hassel, March 20, 1941.

⁹Baumbach, p. 74; German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 29.

through" as the Yugoslavs scurried for cover. Behind the tanks came the 4th Mountain and 294th Infantry divisions. As the panzers roared on in the direction of Nis, the mountain and infantry divisions began securing the roads and bridges to the rear of the Yugoslav defense positions. The important supply center of Pirov fell to Kleist's panzers in the early afternoon of the first day. The following day Nis fell to the Germans, as did Leskovac.¹⁰ Kleist reported on the same day (April 9) that all enemy resistance on the Nis front had collapsed, while the Germans had captured thus far "one hundred guns, including twenty-eight antiaircraft and antitank guns, one hundred thirty-one new Dornier aircraft engines, 1,500 tons of gasoline, several ration depots, spare parts depots, and ration trains."¹¹

Soon after this favorable report, Field Marshal Brauchitsch decided to detach the 5th Panzer division from Kleist's corps and send it to the Bitolj Gap by way of Leskovac-Skoplje in order to provide more punching power in that section.¹² At the same time, the 60th Motorized Infantry division, then in reserve in Bulgaria, was called up to replace

¹⁰Halder, Vol. VI, April 9, 1941.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 91.

the departing panzer division.¹³ In the meantime Kleist's remaining panzers continued to proceed in the direction of Belgrade. Advance German spearheads reached Kragujevac on the evening of April 10. The next day the 60th Motorized Infantry division arrived from Bulgaria. The division was promptly ordered to drive from Kragujevac toward Sarajevo, while Kleist sustained his drive on Belgrade.¹⁴

Already, the day before (April 10), the German Second Army had commenced its three-pronged attack in northwestern Yugoslavia. The German High Command had decided to move up the Second Army's schedule two days in order to co-ordinate its planned drives with Kleist's unexpectedly rapid advance, in spite of the fact that two of its infantry divisions (79th and 125th), scheduled to drive on Belgrade, were not fully deployed.¹⁵ After the usual artillery barrage, coinciding with a heavy bombing and strafing of the enemy positions, General Heinrich von Vietinghof's panzers struck across the Drava on bridges long since secured by the Germans.

¹³Apparently part of this division was left in Bulgaria. Von Thoma reported on April 25, that two weeks would be sufficient to rehabilitate this division; Halder, Vol. VI., April 25, 1941; but Halder says the division cannot possibly be refitted on time just five days later; Halder, Vol. VI, April 30, 1941.

¹⁴Much of this is a guess based on evidence available. Das Heer, p. 155, places the division on reserve at the start of the campaigns. On April 11, the division was advancing from Kragujevac, German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 92.

¹⁵They were kept in reserve and not used, German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 39.

He then wheeled his panzers in the general direction of Zagreb. At the same time, three German divisions, led by the 101st Light, advanced along the right bank of the Drava and Sava Rivers toward Belgrade. With the German panzers advancing on their rear, the Yugoslav army, opposite the Austrian and Italian frontiers, appeared to panic as they abandoned their positions in droves. Zagreb fell on April 11, to Vietinghof's panzers, and at the same time units of the 1st Mountain division were just west of the city in vigorous pursuit of the retreating Yugoslavs. Von Weichs seeing the danger that might arise if the Yugoslavs were able to establish a redoubt in the mountains around Sarajevo, ordered Vietinghof's panzers to wheel immediately, pursue relentlessly, and round up the fleeing Yugoslavs with all possible speed. The Yugoslav column, which was described as being 150 miles long, was at the same time "bombed, strafed, and blasted" by the Luftwaffe.¹⁶

In the meantime, both German advances on Belgrade were slowed down by the bombed out bridges and others blown up by the Yugoslav demolition squads. Adolph Hitler, on April 11, took a personal hand in facilitating the Yugoslav campaign by ordering the German Second SS Motorized infantry division to drive on Belgrade from Timisoura, apparently without

¹⁶This panic and retreat is well described in a British War Office report after the German attack. The report can be found in: Encyclopedia Americana, 9th ed., Vol. XXIX, p. 556zz.

consulting the German High Command.¹⁷ Although the Fuehrer consented to turn over the operational control of the division to the German High Command, he refused to withdraw the division as it wished. Thus, this force formed the third prong in the race for the Yugoslav capital.¹⁸

Much to the joy of the Fuehrer, the race for Belgrade was won by the SS division. First Lieutenant Klingenberg, finding all the Danube Bridges destroyed, took an SS platoon across the river on pneumatic rafts in the afternoon of April 12. His patrol then marched into the city unmolested and raised the swastika over the German legation late that same afternoon. Two hours later (7 p.m.) the mayor of Belgrade officially handed over the city to Klingenberg, who was accompanied by a previously interned representative of the German Foreign Ministry.¹⁹ Kleist's panzers, as well as units driving from the north, entered the city the following morning. The SS division's only casualty reported on the uneventful trip from Timisoura was an officer killed by a civilian sniper's bullet.²⁰

¹⁷For prestige reasons and propaganda purposes. Note the resentment, obviously over this act, by Halder, Vol.VI, April 11, 1941.

¹⁸German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 33.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 54.

²⁰Ibid., p. 64.

Meanwhile, Vietinghof's panzers were somewhat handicapped by the fleeing Yugoslavs congesting the roadways. Thousands of prisoners were rounded up during the next several days as the panzers by-passed many fleeing Yugoslavs in trying to reach Sarajevo. On April 16, Vietinghof's panzers, after joining with the column advancing from Kragujevac, were on the outskirts of the old Bosnian capital. The following day, General Kalafatovic negotiated the surrender of the entire Yugoslav army, on paper twenty-eight divisions strong, in reality some of the divisions merely represented by a skeleton force.²¹ A few troops, led by a Serbian colonel named Mihailovitch disappeared in the mountains. That same day King Peter and his government fled to Athens from the seaport of Kotor.²² The armistice became effective at noon on April 18, 1941. In just twelve days from the time Stume's corp had crossed the border, the Yugoslav phase of the Balkan campaign was over.

The German victory over Yugoslavia was achieved at a very low cost. The total German casualties for the entire campaign came to just 558 men, with 151 killed, 392 wounded, and 15 missing in action.²³ The German losses in tanks and

²¹Lukacs, p. 375.

²²Ibid.

²³German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 64.

motor vehicles were, from all indications, almost negligible; while the German Luftwaffe reported its losses as "exceptionally low."²⁴ A major loss for the Germans seemed to be the full use of the Danube River for nearly a month. The German engineering battalion had successfully thwarted the Yugoslav plans to destroy the Iron Gates, but the retreating Yugoslavs had filled the main channel in the vicinity of Belgrade with hundreds of bags of cement.²⁵

The Germans on the other hand took 344,000 Yugoslav prisoners, not counting a number of Croats, Germans, Bulgarians, and Hungarians that were soon released after being screened.²⁶ The Germans captured "several hundred" Yugoslav tanks and seventy-five Yugoslav airplanes left intact on the ground.²⁷ The entire Yugoslav navy except for two submarines and a few minor craft also fell into Axis hands.²⁸ Tons of strategic material, on a par with Kleist's bag at Nis, fell to the Germans at several of the military

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Hassel, May 5, 1941; Department of the Army, German Antiguerrilla Operations in the Balkans (1941-1944), D/A Pamphlet No. 20-243 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office), p. 6. Hereafter cited as German Antiguerrilla Operations.

²⁶German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 64 and 112. The number was gained by adding the 90,000 captured in the south to the 254,000 prisoners captured elsewhere. The term German means ethnic Germans from Slovenia, Banat, etc. that were part of the Yugoslav army.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Lukacs, p. 375.

fronts. The Belgrade-Nis-Salonika railroad was now also completely at the disposal of the Germans, although much of the track and many trains had been destroyed chiefly by the Luftwaffe. But supplies by way of the railroad began arriving at Salonika from Belgrade as early as April 20.²⁹

On April 14, just two days after the fall of Belgrade and eight days after the beginning of the campaign, the Germans ordered the transfer of three corps headquarters and seven infantry divisions out of the Balkan theatre of war in order to give the men rest and prepare the equipment for the impending invasion of Russia.³⁰ Consequently on April 21, four days after the surrender of Yugoslavia, two motorized divisions (60th and 16th) were withdrawn from Yugoslavia. Then on April 23, the 8th, 14th, and 11th Panzer divisions were ordered to return to Germany.³¹ Upon inspecting the two motorized and three panzer divisions on April 25, General von Thoma reported: "Little wear and tear on vehicles" and "low expenditure of ammunition," but "rubber track blocks badly worn by mountain roads" (one division needed 1,900 rubber

²⁹Whether these supplies came from Belgrade all the way on the same train, this author does not know. There were many railroad bridges destroyed near Belgrade. They could have been repaired or the loads could have been transferred from river traffic.

³⁰German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 151.

³¹Ibid.

track blocks). "Three weeks will be sufficient for rehabilitation of all units."³²

It could have been conceivably reported at the same time that there were only four complete German divisions (including one mountain, one SS, and two infantry) and several lesser units still in Yugoslavia.

By this time, it was nearly all over in Greece also, due to a series of catastrophes suffered by the Anglo-Greek forces. As early as April 10, the Germans were in a position to assault the Vermion-Aliakhmon defenses. According to the German plan at that time, two attack groups would be used for the duration of the campaign involving eight German divisions.³³ The Anglo-Greek position from the east would be assaulted by the 2d Panzer, the 5th and 6th Mountain, and 72d Infantry divisions. The attack from the vicinity of the Bitolj Gap would include the 1st SS reinforced regiment (light division), the 73d Infantry, most of the 9th Panzer, and the 5th Panzer (due to arrive on April 11).³⁴

On April 10, an advanced patrol, attached to the Adolph Hitler SS, discovered to its complete amazement that the Bitolj Gap was only lightly guarded. Stume, without waiting for the 5th Panzer division, immediately acted. That same day the Germans forced the Gap, and that evening captured the

³²Halder, Vol. VI, April 25, 1941.

³³Ibid., p. 91.

³⁴Ibid.

strategic Greek city of Florina.³⁵ The British armored brigade and the two Greek divisions in the area now rather belatedly rushed up to meet the German advance. A two day battle in a snowstorm followed (April 11-12). The Germans, minus their Luftwaffe advanced only slowly. The Germans lost four tanks during the battle. The British losses are unrecorded, but they probably were higher.³⁶ On the evening of April 12, the British and their Greek allies "strategically withdrew" to shorter defense lines anchored at Gravena and Kozani on the left flank. The next day found the British Armored Brigade protecting the flank near Kozani, holding a favorable defensive position on a hill overlooking a broad stream. The only way the Germans could reach the stream (it was thought) was by way of a narrow gorge. The first two German tanks coming through the gorge were destroyed by the British guns. Finally, in a treacherous crossing downstream, the Germans flanked the British position. The British, in abandoning the hill, left thirty-two tanks intact, a number of antitank guns, as well as a few trucks.³⁷ All

³⁵The Bitolj Gap was defended by only 2,000 frontier guards, Encyclopedia Americana, 9th ed., Vol. XXIX, p. 557. It appears that reports from Yugoslavia were not clear and the British and Greeks did not expect such a rapid German advance to the Gap. German Campaign in the Balkans, pp. 92-93.

³⁶German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 94.

³⁷Ibid.

resistance before Kozani collapsed. On the morning of April 14, an advanced spearhead of the 9th Panzer division reached the city.³⁸

Meanwhile, on April 13-14, the Greek Epirus Army attempted a withdrawal extending along its entire Albanian front. The German 73d Infantry division and the Adolph Hitler SS were successful in blocking the withdrawal in the north end, so it seems, only the hesitant pursuit of the Italians saved the situation from sheer disaster, as it was reported that confusion and panic among the Greek soldiers was widespread.³⁹ However, the withdrawal did enable the Greek Epirus Army to fall back on Gravina. This could have conceivably helped the British in shortening their defense lines if it had not been for the British disaster at Kozani.

Meanwhile, advancing from Salonika, the Germans had forded the Vardar on April 11. Two columns began assaulting the Anglo-Greek positions. The strongest of these German columns began advancing along the mountainous coastal area adjacent to the Gulf of Salonika. The objectives of this drive were Katerini and Olympus Pass. The other German column moved inland toward Servia, a city just south of the Aliakmon River. Katerini fell to the German 2d Panzer division on April 14, just three hours after Kozani had fallen to the

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., p. 95.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 97.

9th Panzer division.⁴⁰ Disaster now faced the British and their Greek allies. If the Germans were able to secure Olympus Pass and the German drive in the direction of Servia linked up with the German drive from Kozani, the Anglo-Greek army would be effectively trapped. The British therefore informed General Papagos that they were preparing a "strategic withdrawal" through Olympus Pass and Tempe Gorge to Larissa, then from this latter city to better defensive positions in the vicinity of the passes at Thermopylae and Brados. General Papagos, at the same time, suggested that in light of the circumstances the British should evacuate the entire country.⁴¹ The British navy had already been alerted by the British government of the need for such a possible evacuation, tentatively scheduled to take place around April 28.⁴²

Under the cover of darkness on the night of April 15, Greek and British troops began withdrawing through the mountain passes. The retreat was covered by one New Zealand brigade at Mount Olympus, one New Zealand battalion and an Australian Brigade at Tempe Gorge, and a force of several mixed battalions near Kalabaka to deal with the threat coming from the direction of Kozani. For the next four days the British retreated southward, harassed all the way by the

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 97.

⁴¹The Grand Alliance, p. 226.

⁴²Ibid., p. 226.

Luftwaffe. On April 16, the Germans assaulted Platanion Ridge, at the Mount Olympus Pass, with one hundred tanks and finally broke through.⁴³ At the same time the Germans advanced on Tempe Gorge, a defile where all the roads in the area converged leading to Larissa. For two days, the German advance was held up by the Australian and New Zealand troops. Finally, on April 18, the Gorge was forced and the defenders annihilated.⁴⁴ On April 19, Larissa fell, with the British leaving ten truckloads of rations and fuel behind for the conquerors.⁴⁵ The next morning, the Germans entered Volos and captured "very large" quantities of crude and diesel oil left by the fleeing Anglo-Greek army.⁴⁶ By April 20, the Germans were in sight of Thermopylae Pass. The British were safely behind the pass, however, Thermopylae Pass was, at the time, being held by remnants of the New Zealand division, while Brados Pass, further inland, was being defended by the 6th Australian division.⁴⁷ The Germans did not wish to test these Anglo-Greek positions, not yet anyway.⁴⁸ For, in the meantime

⁴³German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 98.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 107.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷The Grand Alliance. p. 228.

⁴⁸Ibid., mentions that the Germans did not severely test the new positions.

another danger had transpired for the British--a possible flanking movement by the Adolph Hitler SS.

On April 19, the Adolph Hitler regiment, protecting the passes against a possible Greek withdrawal from the Albanian front in the vicinity of Gravena, now received orders to proceed to Yannina in order to prevent a possible Greek withdrawal in the south. Late in the day of April 20, the mission was completed following a pitched battle with the Greeks in the high Metsoon Pass of the Pindus Mountains.⁴⁹ Now, with almost all the major passes held by the Germans, his soldiers' morale at a low point, and even the hesitant Italian army pressing forward, General Tsolakoglau urged the Greek government to capitulate. That same day Tsolakoglau surrendered the entire Greek Epirus Army to the Germans.⁵⁰ The Adolph Hitler SS was now free for a drive down the left flank of the Anglo-Greek positions at Thermopylae. This threat was still four or five days away, but with no hope of aid from the Greeks only one decision could be made, and this had to be done in a hurry--to evacuate. The evacuation tentatively scheduled for April 28, was now definitely set to commence on April 24, 1941.⁵¹

⁴⁹German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 95.

⁵⁰The Germans offered honorable terms to the Greeks even allowing the officers to keep their side arms. Mussolini was not consulted before the surrender, and the Italians remained technically at war with Greece until April 23. Ibid.

⁵¹The Grand Alliance, p. 229.

The rearward movement to the beaches began on the night of April 22-23, and was carried out for the next five consecutive nights. Nine points of embarkation were selected along the coastline between Marathon to the north and Kalamati, in the Peloponnesus, to the south.⁵² The Luftwaffe, completely unmolested in the air after destroying the last remaining British planes at Argus, continually attacked the Anglo-Greek movements and all the evacuating had to be done at night. To compound the Anglo-Greek miseries, the Germans forced the passes at Thermopylae on April 25. On the following day German parachute troops captured the Corinth Canal and sealed off the Peloponnesus from the Greek mainland.⁵³ That same day the Adolph Hitler SS captured Patros and also entered the Peloponnesus. The following day (April 27), Athens fell to the German 2d Panzer division, as it was trying to outflank a British position.⁵⁴ British forces now fought a delaying action whenever possible in order to get their last remaining troops evacuated. The final evacuation was completed on the night of April 28-29. Greece had already surrendered on April 24.

⁵²Ibid., p. 229-230.

⁵³The Germans wanted to capture the canal intact. They were successful in doing this, but an accidental hit by a British artillery shell struck the powder charge before the Germans could remove it and the canal was destroyed after all.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 108.

The German victory over the Anglo-Greek forces on mainland Greece, in a sense, only appears a little less spectacular than the German conquest of Yugoslavia. During the twenty-three days of fighting on the Greek mainland the Germans suffered only 5,100 casualties, with 1,100 of these listed as killed.⁵⁵ The British alone lost 11,840, either killed or captured, out of their Expeditionary Force of 53,051 men.⁵⁶ Numerous other British sailors lost their lives on the more than twenty ships of the British Empire sunk by the Luftwaffe.⁵⁷ Also, the Germans took some 270,000 Greek prisoners during the campaign.⁵⁸ True, the German panzer divisions engaged in the campaign lost between thirty and forty tanks,⁵⁹ but the British conveniently made up this loss by leaving thirty-two tanks for the Germans in one engagement. The only serious losses were suffered by the Luftwaffe, as over one hundred of their planes were either

⁵⁵German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 112; Tippelskirch, p. 161, claims there were only 799 dead and missing in both Yugoslavia and Greece; Adolph Hitler announced the casualties amounted to less than 5,500 in both campaigns, Lukacs, p. 384.

⁵⁶The Grand Alliance, pp. 232-233.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 222, 230, and 232-233.

⁵⁸German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 112.

⁵⁹This appears to be nearly correct, but conceivably some of the conclusion of the campaign. Ibid., p. 94; Halder, May 8, 1941.

shot down or had crashed during the campaign.⁶⁰ But besides sinking a score of British ships, at least thirty Greek ships were sunk by the German air arm,⁶¹ and the British losses in planes seemed almost as high as that suffered by the Germans.⁶²

On the other hand the German victory had its drawbacks. The British gained control of almost the entire Greek navy including a cruiser, six destroyers, and four submarines.⁶³ The Greek mountainous roads and rough terrain had a great effect on the German motorized equipment, as indicated by the German supply headquarters at Larissa requesting 1,500 new tires at one point in the campaign.⁶⁴ Moreover, the Germans had at least ten divisions and one regiment still in Greece.⁶⁵ Eight of these divisions, including all three panzer, were scheduled to take part in the launching of Barbarossa.⁶⁶

⁶⁰Baumbach, p. 75. Churchill's The Grand Alliance, p. 233, claims confirmed enemy losses of 231 planes from November to the end of the Greek campaign. This may be so, but probably many of the planes were Italian or shot down before the campaign began.

⁶¹The Grand Alliance, pp. 222 and 233.

⁶²At least the 100 planes the British had in Greece were destroyed before the campaign ended.

⁶³The Grand Alliance, p. 233.

⁶⁴German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 107.

⁶⁵Including the eight mentioned during the final phase of the campaign and the 164th and 50th Infantry divisions and the 125th regiment occupying Eastern Macedonia, Thrace, and Salonika.

⁶⁶The 5th and 6th Mountain divisions are the exceptions.

Richthofen's Eighth Air Corps and units of Loehr's Fourth Air Force were scattered throughout the Balkans. Most of Richthofen's planes were scheduled to launch the Russian invasion from bases in Poland and East Prussia, while most of Loehr's craft were assigned to support Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt's thrusts from Rumania.⁶⁷

To make matters even more difficult, on April 25, the Fuehrer extended Operation Marita to include the Aegean "appendages" and strategic island of Crete. The new code name of Operation Mercury was assigned the latter project.⁶⁸ This cause Halder to approximate the date for the German invasion of the Soviet Union as "June 12, 1941."⁶⁹ But on April 20, Hitler announced that "Operation Barbarossa will begin on June 22, 1941." The military was at the same time ordered to follow a "maximum performance timetable" from May 23 to the final date of execution.⁷⁰

According to Hitler's new extended plan for operation in the Balkans, the Aegean Islands would be occupied by the 164th Infantry division which was at that time occupying Eastern Macedonia. Small boats would be used for the project,

⁶⁷Halder, Vol. VI, May 12, 1941.

⁶⁸Das Heer, Vol. II, p. 84.

⁶⁹Halder, Vol. VI, April 28, 1941. The probable date of June 12 is also mentioned in a report of April 28, 1941, in Trials of War Criminals, Vol. X, p. 983.

⁷⁰Trials of War Criminals, Vol. X, p. 984. (Italics, mine.)

most of which would come from the Greek booty. The main task of taking Crete would be assigned to the 7th Airborne division then stationed in Rumania. The division would be transported from Bucharest to Greece by the use of 4,800 trucks.⁷¹ The original plan called on this parachute division to be assisted on the ground by the 22d Airborne division which was specifically trained for an operation of this sort. This division, too, was in Rumania. The Barbarossa planning unit objected to the use of this division on the grounds that it would "rob" Barbarossa of valuable transportation.⁷² Thus, it was decided that one of the mountain divisions in the area would assist the 7th Airborne division during the Crete operation.

By early May, the German General Staff was expressing an attitude of discouragement over the developing situation in the southeast, and the forty-two days allowed on May 30 by the Fuehrer to prepare for Barbarossa must have seemed like a very short time indeed. The Germans still had to move better than thirty divisions from the west plus those in Greece and Yugoslavia, and the Germans were suffering from an acute shortage of motor vehicles now intensified by the "Crete decision." The 300 trucks and 400 automobiles assigned to the eastern buildup areas from the Greek and Yugoslav

⁷¹Halder, Vol. VI, May 8, 1941.

⁷²Ibid., April 28, 1941.

booty aided very little when compared to the over-all needs.⁷³ Also roads, bridges, rails, and trains were in bad need of repair in both Yugoslavia and Greece. Halder frankly admitted that because of transportation difficulties, the time needed for the re-fitting of all units, and the pending Crete campaign, it was likely that two panzer divisions (2d and 5th), and one motorized division (60th) could not be ready for the launching of Barbarossa.⁷⁴ To compound the difficulties, Richthofen was demanding rail transportation to the Polish and East Prussian build-up areas for his entire corps. This feat would have required the use of approximately four hundred materiel trains. Halder countered that this could only be done if Barbarossa were postponed from seven to nine days.⁷⁵ Fortunately, soon after, Hitler decided that most of the ground personnel attached to the Eighth Air Corps would be sent to their deployment areas in Poland and East Prussia as soon as possible, but with one hundred materiel trains being provided for shipment only as far as Oderberg. The flying units would remain, however, until they could be released from the Crete campaign.⁷⁶ The Fuehrer eased the transportation problem further by deciding to keep the 2d and 5th Panzer divisions

⁷³Ibid., May 6, 1941, and May 8, 1941.

⁷⁴Ibid., April 30, 1941.

⁷⁵Ibid., May 12, 1941.

⁷⁶Ibid., May 13, 1941.

in Greece until after the successful conclusion of Operation Mercury. The 5th and 6th Mountain divisions, that were to assist in taking Crete, were also ordered to remain in Greece, as were the 164th Infantry, then occupying the Aegean Islands, the 50th Infantry, occupying the Vardar River Valley and Salonika, and the 125th Regiment, stationed at Salonika. Except for the number of anti-aircraft units, all other German troops and their equipment were expected to re-deploy as soon as possible.⁷⁷

Looking back, the Yugoslav military campaign was easy and seemed to cause no further delay in Operation Barbarossa. Moreover, there can be no doubt that the German invasion of Yugoslavia contributed to the more rapid defeat of the Greeks and their British allies. This could mean that the Fuehrer had been searching for an excuse to attack Yugoslavia all along and that his apparent anger at the Yugoslav "coup" was slightly feigned. But evidence points to the contrary, since Field Marshal Keitel and General Jodl testified that they had drawn up the new invasion plans within forty-eight hours after the "coup,"⁷⁸ and most of the divisions used in northern Yugoslavia had been transferred from other areas.⁷⁹ On the

⁷⁷This was gained from several sources notably Halder, May 13, 1941; and U.S., Department of Army, German Antiguerrilla Operations in the Balkans (1941-1944), p. 16.

⁷⁸See: "Chapter I," page 18.

⁷⁹See: "Chapter II," p. 31.

other hand, the Fuehrer must have been aware of the Yugoslav-Greek-British position. Halder realized the weakness of Yugoslavia and it was apparent that General Papagos was not withdrawing from Albania. The forces in Bulgaria were, moreover, tailor-made for the task.

Meanwhile, poor Halder, Hitler had postponed Barbarossa "up to four weeks"⁸⁰ in March; the Germans had allowed four weeks for the re-deployment of German division from Greece after "driving out the British";⁸¹ the Greek campaign had ended on April 30, while on the same date only four divisions assigned to Barbarossa were left in Yugoslavia. But the invasion of Crete was to complicate everything.

⁸⁰See: "Chapter I," p. 18.

⁸¹See: "Chapter I," p. 11.

CHAPTER IV

THE INVASION OF CRETE

In the spring of 1941, Hitler appeared to have little doubt about the strategic value of Crete, even though his immediate plans for conquest at the time only involved the Suez Canal and the Middle East as a secondary theatre of war. He feared that as long as the British possessed the island, they could probably maintain naval and air superiority in the eastern Mediterranean while the bulk of the Luftwaffe was engaged in Russia. Crete could also serve as a British springboard to the Balkan coast or serve as a potential air base from which the Rumanian oil fields could be attacked. On the other hand, with Crete in Axis hands, British threats in the area would be eliminated and the sea lanes in the Aegean would be safe. Crete could also serve as a potential Axis jump-off base for naval and air operations in the eastern Mediterranean.¹ More important still, with the impending

¹There can be little doubt that these were the views of Hitler since almost all are expressed at one time or another. See: Halder, Vol. VI, October 24, 1940; Hitler's letter to Mussolini on November 19, 1940, Lukacs, p. 347.

invasion of Russia, it could be used to support a ground offensive against Egypt and the Suez Canal by the Italians and the meager German forces under the command of General Erwin Rommel.²

Even so, Hitler, after announcing Operation Mercury, was tempted several times to postpone the project indefinitely and did not make his final commitment for the invasion of Crete until May 13.³ Possibly he was weighing a few of the arguments against the invasion of Crete voiced by some of his generals. Some felt that too many first-class troops and especially planes were being diverted to a secondary theatre of war. Also transportation that might otherwise be used for Barbarossa would instead be utilized for Operation Mercury.⁴ In the end, apparently Hitler felt that too many divisions would be needed in the Balkans with Crete in British hands. Thus, it would be better to eliminate this potential sore spot while the planes were available rather than having to do it later when much of the German Air Force would be committed in Russia.⁵

²See view of Halder, Vol. VI, April 24, 1941.

³Halder, Vol. VI, May 12, 1941, states: "They will have to make up their mind whether or not they want to do 'Merkur' (Mercury)." Halder, Vol. VI, May 13, 1941, indicates that they finally decided to do the operation.

⁴Halder, Vol. VI, May 12, 1941.

⁵This is indicated by the number of troops he ordered to remain in Greece until after Operation Mercury.

The German invasion of Crete was tentatively scheduled to commence on May 18, 1941.⁶ Since this was to be Goering's show, the entire German invasion forces were to be commanded by General Richthofen of the Eighth Air Corps and General Kurt Student of the Eleventh Air Corps. The latter corps would consist of the 7th Airborne division and the 5th Mountain division. The 6th Mountain division would be kept in reserve. The plan worked out by the air force called for 16,000 men to be dropped or landed from the air and a further 7,000 to be landed from the sea.⁷ Except for a few security planes to protect the Rumanian oil fields, all the planes of the Fourth Air Force and Eighth Air Corps were to be transferred as soon as possible to airfields at Meneidi, Eleusis, Argos, Attica, the Peloponnesus, Italian Rhodes, and the Aegean Islands. In all, 650 aircraft were to support the air and sea landings.⁸ In order to ferry the troops to Crete for the operation, 530 transport aircraft and 100 gliders were to be brought in from as far away as Norway.⁹ The reinforcements from the sea were to be brought in by 63 captured motor-sailers

⁶Halder, Vol. VI, May 17, 1941.

⁷Hart, p. 160.

⁸The Grand Alliance, p. 279; German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 124.

⁹The Grand Alliance, p. 279, corresponds to Halder, Vol. VI, May 28, 1941.

(calques) and seven captured freighters each with a 300-ton capacity.¹⁰ Several Italian destroyers were expected to provide the escort, as was the Luftwaffe. While this buildup was taking place, the 164th Infantry division was expected to occupy the Aegean Islands in small boats commencing May 1, and concluding their operation around May 11.

The carrying out of these plans by the Germans was much more difficult than it might appear. Even though most of the planes were expected to fly to their new assigned fields and most of the transports were loaded with supplies as well, the German transportation system in Greece as elsewhere was severely taxed. In Greece, the roads became badly congested with troops trying to leave and others entering at the same time; the makeshift road repairs were failing to hold up at crucial moments; much of the railroad track in Greece and Yugoslavia had not been repaired; and the Greek harbors had been well mined by the British. A German Twelfth Army report on May 8, frankly stated that it was worse than during military operations.¹¹ Then, as more planes began arriving in Greece, it was discovered that the Germans were suffering an acute shortage of tanker trucks.¹² The trucks were requisitioned from areas as far away as France.

¹⁰German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 124.

¹¹Ibid., p. 129.

¹²Ibid.

After the Fuehrer had decided that the Crete operation would take place, he postponed the project for two days in order to allow the occupation of Antikythera. Halder and others protested to this on the grounds that all possibilities of surprise in the invasion of Crete would be lost and it would probably cause a delay in Barbarossa.¹³ But the Fuehrer had his way and the Crete invasion was postponed until May 20.

However, there would have been no surprise achieved in the Crete invasion, Antikythera or not. British agents in Greece transmitted accurate information on the German buildup and left little doubt as to the new German objective.¹⁴ Churchill also had few doubts as to the strategic value of Crete. The British were prepared to stop the German tide here and now and possibly change the complexion of the war. The strength of the island was increased from 24,000 to 28,600 men. Additional tanks, antiaircraft and field guns were brought from North Africa, and even from the British homelands in order to bolster the defense of Crete. The British would also commit almost their entire Mediterranean fleet to the expected fray, including at least: one aircraft carrier, three battleships, nine cruisers, and twenty-four destroyers.¹⁵ Only in the air

¹³Halder, Vol. VI, May 17, 1941.

¹⁴The Grand Alliance, p. 271.

¹⁵There were probably more. This many are mentioned by Churchill in various pages throughout The Grand Alliance.

were the British defenses weak, but even here they were willing to do the best they could. The islands' air defenses were increased from twenty-two to almost sixty planes by the addition of new Leicesters to the Crete squadrons.¹⁶ As General Wavell stated it, the Germans would probably find their "scorcher," as the impending German invasion of Crete was called, "a red hot proposition."¹⁷

Meanwhile the Germans were continuing their preparations for the assault of the island. According to the German plan of attack, three general areas in Crete would receive the heaviest German concentrations: Heraklion in the east; Retimo in the center; and Suda Bay, Canea, and the airfield at Maleme in the west. The capture of the airfield at Maleme was to be the first major objective. The base was to receive continual bombing and strafing for "at least" one hour after the first wave of German planes had arrived over the island. By that time, it could be reasonably assumed, the British defenses around the air base would be rendered impotent. Transport planes and gliders would follow up the bombing by coming in with the first wave of assault troops who would, according to the plan, parachute in next to the air base, or land just west of the field. The assault groups would then establish themselves with the aid of the Luftwaffe, and follow this up

¹⁶The Grand Alliance, pp. 279 and 282.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 282.

with a prompt attack on the air base. After the base was secured by the German force, it could then be used to bring in more reinforcements for an attack on Canea and Suda Bay. Later in the day, when the British would be more likely rushing reinforcements to Maleme, the same procedure would be applied to the air bases at Heraklion and Retimo.¹⁸

The German attack commenced at dawn on May 20, 1941, with violent air bombardment and strafings throughout the entire island; Maleme was hit the hardest, and within a few minutes after the initial attacks almost all of her antiaircraft batteries were silenced.¹⁹

By 8:00 a.m. there seemed to be little left of the base. The hangars were all destroyed, fires had broken out all over the airfield, and the field seemed to be ringed in flames. Then the first wave of German troop transport planes began arriving. The defenders, who had momentarily abandoned their weapons during the terrific Luftwaffe raids, by this time had returned to their stations and began pouring in a murderous fire at the transport planes and gliders. One after another of the German troop carriers landed prematurely on the beaches; some landed directly on the fire-swept field, while others crashed in the scrub. The first German parachutists, who

¹⁸Ibid., p. 279-280, contains much of the German plan for the attack which was acquired by the British after the war.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 241, in Churchill's words, "put out of action practically at once."

jumped from altitudes of three hundred to six hundred feet, were either shot in the act of coming down or were engaged in hand to hand fighting by the defenders. Because of the close quarters of combat, it was almost impossible for the Luftwaffe to give support. The result was that almost the entire first few waves of troops landing at Maleme were wiped out.²⁰ Lieutenant General Wilhelm Suessman, the designated German commander of the ground forces in Crete, was killed, and Major General Eugene Meindl, the commander of the German forces at Maleme, was seriously wounded.²¹ Seemingly oblivious to these losses, the Germans kept coming as the crack-up of German planes continued. It was not until the late afternoon of May 20, that the Germans were able to establish themselves and hold positions west of the base. The British still retained possession of the airfield, however.

During the same afternoon, similar German tactics were employed at Retimo and Heraklion with almost similar results. By nightfall, only scattered German units were able to establish themselves in the vicinity of the two air bases. In all,

²⁰Ibid., p. 285-286; German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 130.

²¹German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 150.

the Germans had attempted to land 7,000 troops during the first day. It was estimated that at least 4,000 of these troops were casualties.²²

The next morning, the British were forced to abandon Maleme, because the Germans had cleared out many of the defensive positions during the night. After the capture of the airfield, the Germans only made a secondary effort to land troops at Heraklion and Retimo, in order to concentrate at Maleme and the Suda Bay area. The German reinforcements were landed directly on the pockmarked airstrip since the British kept up an artillery and mortar barrage on the field. The British fire ceased only when Luftwaffe fighters and bombers were flying near by. The German transport planes came in at ten to fifteen minute intervals, landing from forty to fifty men each.²³ This pace, along with the frequent mishaps on the landing field and with only one airfield in German hands, caused a great deal of concern to the German leadership. In spite of the risks involved, the only solution appeared to be to try to reinforce the Germans by sea during

²²This may be a little high but it must be close. Halder mentions that the assault regiment of the 7th airborne suffered nearly 1,000 dead and lost 50 officers. Halder, Vol. VI, May 28, 1941.

²³The Grand Alliance, p. 280.

the night as previously planned.²⁴ The first convoy was sent out by the Germans to Crete on the night of May 21, and promptly disaster struck as a British fleet of three cruisers and four destroyers sighted the Germans. In the ensuing struggle for survival, the Germans lost at least 500 out of the 2,300 men attached to this seaborne force.²⁵ Meanwhile, that same evening at Maleme, the British counterattacked, but the attack was promptly repulsed by the Germans.

On May 22, with more troops continually being landed as reinforcements, the Germans began their slow advance toward the town of Canea and nearby Suda Bay. The battle was to last five days, as the British, constantly being "harrassed" by the Luftwaffe, checked the German advance at crucial points. The Germans made several more attempts to reinforce their units by sea, but in every attempt the German's boats were forced to turn back. No serious losses were suffered by the Germans in these latter seaborne convoys. However, on the night of May 21, several battalions of the 2d Panzer division were caught by the British sailing out of Patros

²⁴These were the first German plans, but then the heavy concentration of British warships seemed to cause the compromise of the plans temporarily in the hopes that the battle would be easier and the reinforcing by sea would not have to be done.

²⁵Churchill claims that, "about four thousand men drowned that night," The Grand Alliance, p. 288. But Halder states these losses as being about 500 out of the 2,300 men in the convoy, Halder, Vol. VI, May 28, 1941.

heading around the Peloponnesus (presumably to Salonika). The Germans lost 1,328 men and most of the division's light and medium artillery.²⁶

As the German battle for Crete continued, the British were successful in landing two battalions of reinforcements on the south coast. Marching overland, the battalions eased the pressure on Heraklion. German detachments, meanwhile, had isolated the Retimo garrison by cutting the road east and west of the airfield as more German reinforcements were dropped by air into this area.

On May 27, the Germans finally succeeded in breaking through the Allied defenses covering Crete and by so doing rendered Suda Bay untenable. The British now made their decision to evacuate the entire island as soon as possible. It was hoped that this could all be done in one night in order to escape the Luftwaffe. The Imperial forces in the Crete area, consisting of the Australian and the New Zealand brigades and the British marine and commandos, taking most of their heavy equipment, withdrew across the mountains to Sfakia that same evening.

On the night of May 28-29, British warships evacuated the Heraklion garrison but suffered severe damages to ships and troops by the Luftwaffe. At the same time the evacuation from Sfakia commenced, with only one ship damaged, as the

²⁶Halder, Vol. VI, May 22, 1941.

Royal Air Force in Egypt supported the operation. The next night, the British ships returning only to Sphakia, completed the evacuation, with the Luftwaffe sinking a British cruiser in the process. The British evacuated about 16,000 troops altogether.²⁷ The isolated Australian and Greek garrisons at Retimo, having received no orders to withdraw, continued fighting until May 31, when they were finally overwhelmed.

The struggle for Crete was expensive for all involved. Out of the approximately 610 transport planes (Ju-52's) the Germans had on all fronts,²⁸ 530 were involved in the invasion of Crete. Out of this latter total "250 cracked up," with 130 listed as a total loss.²⁹ Furthermore, at least 50 of the 100 gliders used were beyond repair.³⁰ The number of bombers, fighter, and reconnaissance craft lost was also very high since between 120 and 150 of these were either shot down or crashed.³¹ According to a study of the German

²⁷The Grand Alliance, p. 301.

²⁸Figured by adding the losses (130) to the twelve groups of 40 each remaining, Halder, Vol. VI, June 5, 1941.

²⁹Ibid., May 28, 1941; June 5, 1941.

³⁰Ibid., May 28, 1941. Total losses were 170, minus 130 Ju-52's equals 50 gliders.

³¹This figure is somewhat debatable. Karl Bartz, Swastika in the Air (London: William Kimber, 1956), p. 88, implies that about 120 of these planes were lost, but he speaks in terms of men, not machines. German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 141, claims that in all, 350 planes were destroyed, but fixes the figure of those participating too high. Other sources fix the total planes lost at about 300 including transports and gliders.

losses on Crete, the conclusion was reached that the Germans suffered 6,453 casualties: 2,071 killed, 2,594 wounded, and 1,788 missing (most presumably dead from drowning).³² This study of the losses on Crete did not consider the 1,328 men of the 2d Panzer division lost when their ship was sunk on May 21-22. Most significant of all, however, was the effect on the Fuehrer of the nearly 4,000 casualties suffered by the elite 7th Airborne division. He declared to General Student that "the day of the parachute troops is over,"³³ thus ending for the duration of the war any usefulness that this type of division might render.

The British losses were even more severe. Besides losing the strategic island of Crete, 2,000 British sailors lost their lives, and nearly 5,000 British dead were counted on the island itself.³⁴ The Germans also took over 12,000 British and Greek prisoners during the Crete campaign.³⁵ The number of British ships sunk or damaged by the Luftwaffe was enormous. The Royal Navy lost three cruisers, six destroyers, three torpedo boats, five motor torpedo boats,

³²U.S., Department of Army, German Casualties, Crete 1941 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1953), p. 3. "British military historians seem inclined to accept the highest German figures (6,453 men) as correct."

³³Hart, p. 160.

³⁴Bartz, p. 88; The Grand Alliance, p. 301.

³⁵Ibid. Bartz's figures are much higher, claiming the Germans took 14, 511 prisoners.

two motor boats, and nineteen shore boats. The German air force also severely damaged an aircraft carrier, three battleships, three cruisers, and eight destroyers.³⁶

Even though almost all of the German planes involved in the Crete invasion were earmarked for the Russian campaign, and their losses were enormous, the Fuehrer must have felt a deep satisfaction over the plight of the British. They would not be in a position to test his "soft underbelly" for some time, and, moreover, the Rumanian oil fields were now out of the range of most British bombers. The Fuehrer was now free to fulfill his "last will and testament" and to deprive the British of their last hope on the continent of Europe. Two days after the conclusion of the Crete campaign (June 1), the Fuehrer issued his final timetable for the German invasion of Russia. "Barbarossa would begin on June 22," as previously scheduled.³⁷

That the great German victory at Crete might later become a factor in Hitler's losing the war must have seemed incredible to the world at the time, but there is not a doubt, without considering other factors, that Hitler's decision to invade Crete caused a further postponement in the Barbarossa

³⁶The Grand Alliance, p. 303, lists six cruisers; Bartz, p. 88, lists eight; Kurt von Tippelskirch, Geshichte Das Zweiten Weltkriegs (Bonm: Athenaum Verlag, 1956), p. 175, adds one more cruiser to the British losses, probably the Fiji which was reduced to a floating hulk.

³⁷Halder, Vol. VI, June 1, 1941.

time schedule. The Fuehrer had decided to invade Crete on April 25, and five days later established the invasion of Russia for June 22. The German General Staff had allowed four weeks for the re-deployment of divisions from Greece, but then after the Fuehrer had decided to invade Crete, fixed June 12 as the probable date for the commencement of the Russian invasion with full knowledge that the Crete invasion was pending and would cause a delay in the re-deployment of divisions from Greece. The German General Staff was undoubtedly underestimating the taxing problems that the Crete campaign would cause and the time required by the Luftwaffe units to be re-fitted and re-deployed for Barbarossa.

CHAPTER V

RE-DEPLOYMENT OF DIVISIONS FOR BARBAROSSA

Prior to the Italian invasion of Greece, two German strategic surveys for a possible German invasion of Russia were completed. One estimated that the Germans could have approximately 147 divisions, including nineteen panzer and twelve motorized, available for an invasion of Russia in the spring of 1941.¹ The other surmised that the Germans "at best" would be able to provide only 145 divisions for a Russian operation during the following spring.²

In December, 1941, soon after Hitler had decided to wage war in Greece as well as Russia, the German General Staff adopted plans establishing 145 divisions, including nineteen panzer and fourteen motorized, for the invasion of the Soviet Union "toward the end of May, 1941."³ These plans, based on the idea that Greece would be eliminated as a military factor and Yugoslavia as well as Bulgaria would join the Tripartite Pact, assigned only two existing German army

¹The "Marchs Plan" completed on August 5, 1940. U.S., Department of Army, German Campaign in Russia . . . Planning and Operations, (1940-1942) (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1955), p. 41. Hereafter cited as German Campaign.

²Ibid., pp. 14-15.

³Ibid., p. 38.

divisions and one regiment to the entire Balkan area during the projected Russian invasion.⁴

The German General Staff held to his plan based on 145 divisions being available for a Russian invasion up to March 17, 1941. The Fuehrer then decided to detach eight divisions, previously allotted to Barbarossa, and assign them the separate role of driving the British from Greece. As previously mentioned, this decision was nullified on March 27, when the Fuehrer decided to invade Yugoslavia and to postpone Barbarossa "up to four weeks." For the next two weeks, the Barbarossa planning unit did not know positively how many divisions would be available for a war against Russia.

However, the Fuehrer had already decided that the occupation of conquered Greece and Yugoslavia would be largely the responsibility of others. As Hitler explained to Mussolini, all he wanted for Germany was the protection of supply and communication routed to the German air bases that would be established in Greece and possibly Crete, the safeguarding of the copper-producing area in northwest Serbia, the priority of German shipping on the Danube, and the former economic privileges granted Germany by the Yugoslav government. Even the occupation of Attica and Salonika was to be primarily the

⁴This is obvious from the distribution chart from Das Heer, Vol. II, p. 111, couple with the Fuehrer's decision of April 17, withdrawing seven divisions from Bulgaria, Ibid., pp. 84-85; and German Campaign in the Balkans, p. 89.

duty of the Italians, as first viewed by Hitler, although the area would be technically under joint occupation.⁵

Even so, the German-planned areas of interest in the Balkans could not be occupied by only two and one-third divisions. Therefore, on April 13, Hitler ordered the drafting of fifteen additional divisions to be made up mainly of men over thirty-five years of age. Because of the Reich's limited resources and the availability of the captured material, these new divisions were to be equipped almost exclusively with war booty. It was further planned that the divisions were to occupy Serbia and the German zone of interest in Croatia; four other divisions would be used to strengthen the German occupation in the west, in Norway, or in the Balkans. The remaining seven divisions would be used to replace and make available additional divisions for Barbarossa.⁷ This resulted in the German General Staff adopting the concept of at least 152 divisions being available for the invasion of Russia.⁸

⁵German Antiguerrilla Operations., p. 13.

⁶Das Heer, Vol. II, p. 86.

⁷Ibid., p. 111.

⁸Ibid., p. 109 and pp. 187-191. The latter pages include a distribution chart for all the German divisions and their assignments on June 22, 1941. See the "Appendix" also.

As already stated, the Fuehrer withdrew his forces very rapidly from Yugoslavia so that by the beginning of May there were only four divisions (294th and 183d Infantry, 4th Mountain, and Gross Deutschland SS), a few battalions of border guards, and part of the 9th Panzer left in that country. All four of these divisions as well as the units of the 9th Panzer were to be replaced by four weak security divisions (704th, 714th, 717th, and 718th) and re-integrated into Barbarossa as soon as the divisions scheduled for occupation had completed their organization and basic training.⁹ The latter was scheduled to take place during early June.

While the Crete invasion was still in progress, Hitler decided to keep the 5th Mountain division in Crete, the 6th Mountain division for the occupation of Athens, the 164th Infantry division in the Aegean Appendages and Salonika, and the 124th regiment in Salonika.¹⁰ Neither of the mountain divisions nor the 124th regiment was slated to take part in Operation Barbarossa. However this was not the case with the 164th Infantry division. Consequently, the Barbarossa planning unit was forced to reduce the total divisions expected for the Russian operation to 151. The Fuehrer also decided to detach one armored battalion, one motorcycle-rifle battalion and one rifle regiment from the 5th Panzer division for duty

⁹ Ibid., p. 86; Halder, Vol. VI, May 13, 1941.

¹⁰ Halder, Vol. VI, May 28, 1941.

in Athens for the time being because of the "atmosphere" in the city and the failure of the Italians to supply occupation troops.¹¹ Although the Italians soon after furnished twelve divisions for the occupation of Greece, with one division available for the Peloponnese and another for Attica, the Fuehrer retained all of these previously mentioned troops in Greece.¹²

While Hitler was insisting that the date for the invasion of Russia was not further to be postponed, by the end of May the Germans still had the following divisions in Greece scheduled to take part in Barbarossa; the 2d and 5th Panzer divisions, the 46th and 73d Infantry divisions, and the Adolph Hitler SS. In addition, the infantry divisions had been weakened by the detachment of two medium antiaircraft battalions for Crete, while each panzer division had to contribute one light antiaircraft battalion for the defense of the island.¹³ All five of these divisions began their homeward journey during the first seven days of June. But by this time, it seemed obvious to the German General Staff that none of these divisions would be ready for the launching of Barbarossa. It was even doubtful whether the 9th Panzer division would be ready for the June 22, invasion even though

¹¹ Ibid., May 28, 1941, and May 31, 1941.

¹² Ibid., May 29, 1941.

¹³ Ibid., May 27, 1941. Apparently this included the 9th Panzer as well as the 2d and 5th.

it had returned to Germany around May 20. The 2d Panzer division on its arrival in Germany was promptly ordered to assist the 9th Panzer in getting its equipment together.¹⁴ Already the 2d Panzer having lost a good share of its equipment through sinking, and the 5th Panzer, having left components in Athens, were reduced to little more than armored regiments.

When the invasion of Russia commenced on June 22, the 152 divisions had been reduced to 139 divisions, including German divisions in Finland.¹⁵ Six of the twelve missing divisions were still attached to the Twelfth Army, and although they were in the Reich at the time, they would not be available as Barbarossa reserves until July 4, 1941. These divisions included the 46th, 73d, 183d, and 294th Infantry divisions, and the 2d and 5th Panzer divisions. Other divisions not available for the Russian invasion although previously scheduled to take part, were the 106th and 112th Infantry divisions that were in the Reich and would not be available as Barbarossa reserves until June 25, the 95th Infantry division from the west which would receive reserve status in Barbarossa on June 27, the 163d Infantry division

¹⁴Ibid., June 18, 1941.

¹⁵See "Appendix," Halder, Vol. VI, June 21, 1941, lists 141 divisions available for Barbarossa in this manner: 102 infantry divisions, 19 panzer, 14 motorized (among them 4 SS) 1 cavalry, and 5 special divisions. Obviously he counts the 2d and 5th panzer in the total, I do not. Otherwise, our figures correspond exactly.

preparing to sail from Norway to Finland, and the 93d and 260th Infantry divisions from the west that would be available as reserves for the Russian front on July 4.¹⁶ Certainly Hitler's decision to invade Crete, which undoubtedly disrupted the maximum performance transportation schedule for Barbarossa commencing on May 23,¹⁷ played a part in not having these latter divisions available just as it did with the six late arriving divisions from the Balkans.

Other divisions from the Balkans had a very difficult time meeting the June 22 deadline. For instance the Adolph Hitler SS surprised almost everybody by arriving on time, but some of its equipment was left behind in the process.¹⁸ The 60th Motorized also made it, even though the division was badly split up by early May.¹⁹ The 9th Panzer was able to join Ewald von Kleist's panzer groups on June 20, but probably was in need of rest. Some divisions from the west also barely made the deadline, such as the 22d Infantry division which

¹⁶Das Heer, Vol. II, pp. 187-191.

¹⁷Halder, Vol. VI, May 12, 1941, notes the date.

¹⁸Note Halder's comments on this division on June 20, 1941, and June 21, 1941.

¹⁹Note Halder's comments concerning this division on April 30, 1941.

arrived with its artillery and trains on June 21, just one day before the Russian invasion was to commence.²⁰

Thus, the Balkan invasions but more specifically the German invasion of Crete seriously hampered the German plans for Barbarossa. Some German divisions were tired out from trying to meet the deadline of June 22, while other could not make it at all. Even the drafting of fifteen additional divisions did not alter the fact that the Germans had less divisions available for the launching of Barbarossa than any of the previously considered or adopted plans had anticipated. Moreover, this available German manpower could have been called into service without the Germans' ever having conducted a Balkan campaign. No wonder Halder was a little dubious when the Fuehrer was insisting that Barbarossa was not to be further postponed.²¹

²⁰Halder, Vol. VI, June 12, 1941, notes the expected arrival of this division.

²¹This dubiousness is reflected in many of the sarcastic comments by Halder during the month of June, 1941, right up to the time of the invasion.

CHAPTER VI

EFFECTS OF THE BALKAN CAMPAIGN ON MEN, MACHINES AND EQUIPMENT USED IN BARBAROSSA

It already has been established that in terms of men, machines, and equipment, the Balkan campaign had some effect on Barbarossa. But was this influence crucial, or perhaps decisive, on any phase of the German campaign¹ in Russia? In terms of men participating and casualties suffered in both campaigns, it would appear that the influence was slight. Less than one quarter of a million Germans participated in the Balkan campaign,² while 3,050,000 troops of the Reich were directly or soon to become directly, involved in the German invasion of Russia on June 22, 1941.³ Moreover, the approximate 13,000 casualties suffered by the Germans in the Balkans⁴ hardly compares with the 50,531 German casualties

¹The Balkan campaign here meaning the invasion of Yugoslavia, Greece, and Crete.

²Figures from the tables in Das Heer, Vol. I. pp. 71 and 72. The total reaches nearly 200,000 men, but this total did not include the Luftwaffe units, engineering battalions, and other smaller units. Thus my estimate.

³German Campaign, pp. 41

⁴Estimate includes the 1,328 men of the 2d Panzer lost because of torpedoing.

recorded by Halder for the first fifteen days of the Russian war,⁵ or the 832,403 casualties accumulated by the Germans in Russia during 1941.⁶ Men used and lost, however, can only be one area of comparison between the two campaigns.

The Germans used six panzer divisions and a total of over 900 tanks in the Balkan campaign.⁷ All of these tanks were, at one time, expected to participate in the initial attack on the Soviet Union. Because of the Balkan campaign two of these panzer divisions with an estimated 300 tanks were not available for the launching of Barbarossa. Of the four divisions that were available, only the 9th Panzer was hard-pressed in meeting the June 22 deadline. Von Kleist's assertions to the contrary,⁸ all evidence indicates that the other three panzer divisions (8th, 11th, and 14th) used in the Balkan campaign were completely refitted by mid-May 1941,

⁵Halder, Vol. VI, July 6, 1941.

⁶Ibid., January 5, 1942. (Data, as of December 31.)

⁷Figured from tables in Das Heer, Vol. II, pp. 106-108. Counting the tanks allotted SS Das Reich, and others, the total could have been more than 1,000 tanks.

⁸Kleist told B. H. Liddell Hart that: "The bulk of the tanks . . . needed overhaul, while their crews needed a rest. A large number of them had driven as far south as the Peloponness." P. 169.

although the wear and tear on the rough Balkan roads might have conceivably left a few aftereffects.⁹

Some earlier German plans anticipated having as many as 4,200 tanks available for Barbarossa in the spring of 1941, but Rommel's needs in North Africa were not assessed a part of this total. Plans finally adopted by the German General Staff expected only between 3,600 and 3,800 tanks to take part in the opening stages of the German-Russian conflict.¹⁰ The number actually available on June 22, 1941, was far below the estimates as indicated in Table 1.

TABLE 1^a

NUMBER OF TANKS AVAILABLE ON JUNE 22, 1941

	Mark I	Mark II	Mark III	Mark IV	Total
Total: Barbarossa (June 22, 1941)	180	1,518	960	669	3,332
Total: German Army (June 22, 1941)	1,064	1,911	1,440	847	5,262

^aDas Heer, Vol. II, p. 106. This corresponds to German Campaign, which gives the total number as 3,350. Guderian's Panzer Leader, p. 150-151 says there were about "3,200." Others claim there were only 2,434 front line tanks. This could be since panzer battalions were withdrawn from the panzer units as replacements.

⁹Halder, Vol VI, April 25, 1941. The last panzer divisions to arrive in the deployment area, besides the 9th, were the 17th and 18th panzer divisions which arrived in Warsaw on June 12. U.S. Department of Army, German Preparations for the Attack against Russia, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing office, 1954), p.1. Hereafter cited as German Preparations.

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German Campaign, p. 41.

The major factor for this tank deficiency on June 22 was undoubtedly the two missing panzer divisions from the Balkans. It might be presumed since the thrusts of the panzer armies were quite rapid in most cases during the first two weeks of the Russian campaign that it might have been better to have the tanks re-fitted and the crews reasonably well-rested at a time when Halder was commenting that only eighty reserve tanks remained.¹¹ This is a faulty assumption. Von Kleist's panzer thrust between the southern edge of the Pripet Marshes and the foothills of the Carpathian Range met very strong resistance. Even von Kleist admitted that he had insufficient armor for his task.¹² Thus, he was forced to commit much of his armor trying to protect his flanks and was unable to complete the quick encirclement of large bodies of Russian troops along the Pruth River facing the Rumanian frontier. Large numbers of Russians escaped to fight again, and the German plans to destroy the Russian army west of the Dnieper received a setback.

Moreover, the Balkan campaign affected the number of tanks available on the Russian front in another way. During the second half of June, 1941, all the tank production of the Reich was spent on re-fitting the two panzer divisions (which

¹¹ Halder, Vol. VI, July 3, 1941.

¹² Hart, p. 175.

when finally committed were sent piece-meal to the panzer armies), strengthening the security divisions, or reinforcing Rommel in North Africa.¹³ Thus, there can be no doubt that the Germans had fewer tanks available in Russia because of the Balkan campaign even after the commitment of the two panzer divisions from Germany.

There is another side to this, however. As Table I indicates, much of the available German armor was not committed to the Russian campaign. This is only part of it. On July 13, 1941, Halder, discussing the over-all condition of the panzer divisions notes that, "average tank losses 50%. Personnel equal to the strength of the field replacement battalions which now have been completely absorbed." While on July 2, Halder stated that "108 additional tanks are expected from production by July 15, and another 105 by July 30, hardly enough to begin to make up the tremendous losses. Yet, since Germany had increased its tank force from 3,000 in November, 1940, to better than 6,000 in the spring of 1941,¹⁴ Germany's tank production had to be more than 210 tanks a month. What

¹³Anyway there were not available in Russia, Halder Vol. VI, July 2, 1941.

¹⁴On November 7, 1941, von Thoma reported to Halder that, "at present we have 3,000 tanks." Halder, Vol. VI, November 7, 1941.

was Hitler doing with the rest of his tanks? Many were being sent to North Africa for the creation of the 21st Panzer division.¹⁵

Out of the estimated 600,000 motor vehicles¹⁶ available for Barbarossa, about 75,000 were used in the Balkan campaign.¹⁷ The wear and tear on many of these vehicles was probably tremendous. It is difficult to say what the German losses were in motor vehicles, but Halder noted a deficit for Barbarossa of 1,430 trucks and 1,256 automobiles on May 8, 1941. At least 300 trucks and 400 automobiles were contributed toward the reduction of the deficit out of the Greek and Yugoslav booty.¹⁸ Counting the Adolph Hitler SS, only three motorized divisions participated in the campaign. The 16th Motorized and the Adolph Hitler SS were placed in reserve for von Kleist's panzer army and saw action within the first days of the campaign. The 60th Motorized, apparently because of its weakened condition, was held in reserve by the German High Command.¹⁹ After several battalions had been detached and sent to the panzer armies as replacements, the remainder of

¹⁵The division formed out of the 5th Light division came into existence around the early part of July, 1941. Das Heer, Vol. II, p. 191.

¹⁶German Campaign, p. 41.

¹⁷Compiled from the table in Das Heer, Vol. I, p. 73.

¹⁸Halder, Vol, VI, May 8, 1941.

¹⁹Das Heer, Vol. II, p. 190.

the latter division joined the Sixth Army and later concluded its war at Stalingrad.

Although the German losses of aircraft were "few" in Yugoslavia, the Germans lost at least 100 planes of all types during the German invasion of Greece, and another 125-150 bombers, fighters and reconnaissance craft, plus at least 130 Ju-52 transport planes in Crete. Almost all of these planes, except those operating from Sicily and North Africa, were earmarked for the Russian campaign. Certainly the planes lost in the Balkans were instrumental in reducing the number available for Barbarossa. During the early stages of planning for the Russian invasion, and after the consideration of the losses to the Luftwaffe in the battle of Britain, the Germans estimated that they would have anywhere from 2,700 to 3,200 aircraft participating in the initial assault on Russia.²⁰ The Germans on June 22, were far below these estimates as Table II, p. 97, indicates.

Even these figures are somewhat deceiving, for though the Fuehrer wanted as many planes in the air as possible on June 22, many of Richthofen's and Loehr's fighters and bombers were still in the process of being refitted and transferred to their respective air groups when the invasion began.

²⁰ German Campaign, pp. 7 and 14-15.

Several German authors, among them Tippleskirch and Baumbach, maintain that only 1,300 combat planes were used against Russia on June 22.²¹

TABLE II^a

NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT AVAILABLE ON JUNE 22, 1941

Unit	Planes				
	Total	Bomber & Dive	Fighter	Recon.	Trans- port
Total	2,320	1,160	720	120	320 ^b
South, 4th A.F.	600	360	210	30	unknown
Center, 2d A.F.	910	490	390	30	unknown
North, 1st A.F.	430	270	110	50	unknown
Finland, 5th A.F.	60	40	10	10	unknown

^aGerman Campaign, p. 41.

^bHalder, Vol. VI, June 5, 1941.

During the early stages of the war with Russia, the lack of German planes did not seem to have an effect. Over 800 Russian aircraft were destroyed the first day of the war,²² and almost everywhere along the German-Russian front the

²¹Tippleskirch, p. 203; Werner Baumbach. Zu Spät. (Munich: Pflaum, 1949) p. 175. Hereafter cited as Zu Spät.

²²Halder, Vol. VI, June 22, 1941.

superior skill of their airmen and their better aircraft enabled the Germans to gain air superiority. But, though the Germans destroyed an estimated 8,000 aircraft during the first two and one-half months of the war,²³ by July 17, Halder was noting that the Russians had regained air superiority in von Leeb's northern sector, and von Kleist was later to comment that his tanks lacked proper air cover.²⁴ The German fighter squadrons were so overworked by September that many of the fighter pilots had to be withdrawn and given a short rest, even though there were no temporary replacements.²⁵

The Balkan campaign cannot be totally blamed for the shortage of German aircraft in Russia, however. The Luftwaffe had over 4,500 planes at the beginning of the Russian campaign, and only a little over one half of these were assigned to the Russian operation.²⁶ Also the loss of air superiority to the Russians at several stages in the German advance was not due so much to the lack of aircraft but was rather caused by the German air force operating from bases too far in the rear.²⁷ The fact cannot be altered, though, that the Germans would have had more planes in Russia if there had not been a Balkan campaign.

²³Raymond L. Garthoff, Soviet Military Doctrine. (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1963), p. 429.

²⁴Hart, pp. 177-178.

²⁵Asher Lee, The German Air Force (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), p. 117; ZU Spat, p. 176.

²⁶German Preparations, p. 2.

²⁷Hart, p. 177.

During the winter of 1941, the Germans depended on the transport planes to supply many of the more isolated "hedgehogs." There is no doubt that in many cases the Ju-52's were inadequate for the task, and German lives were lost because of it.²⁸ Then in the battle of Stalingrad, the planes lost at Crete were missed, perhaps fatally, by von Paulus' Sixth Army. After the ring had been closed around the Sixth Army many Germans, including von Paulus, hoped to be supplied from the air. "Sixth Army will be in position at Easter. All you people have to do is supply it better,"²⁹ commented Paulus' Chief of Staff, Major General Arthur Schmidt, when General Erich von Manstein's representative requested that the Sixth Army attempt a breakout. The representative retorted, among other things, that the Germans were not "in a position to produce machines out of a hat."³⁰ In order to meet the minimum requirements of the Sixth Army an estimated 550 tons of supplies had to be flown in daily, requiring an estimated 225 Ju-52's. The Germans were never able to muster more than eighty operational Junkers at any one time.³¹ Moreover the bad weather prevented many of the daily flights.

²⁸Ibid., p. 192.

²⁹Alan Clark, Barbarossa, The Russian-German Conflict, 1941-1945 (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1965), p. 271.

³⁰Ibid., p. 272.

³¹Ibid., p. 284.

The rest is history. The Sixth Army held out only until the end of January, and from that point on, the Germans were fighting mainly a defensive war in Russia. Would the 130 Ju-52's lost at Crete have made any difference? It is difficult to say, but there is a chance that they might have.

The effect of the late arrival and nonavailability of the infantry divisions on Barbarossa is somewhat difficult to evaluate. But there can be no doubt that they tended to disrupt the German transportation schedule, and in one instance at least a nonavailable division was needed in the Russian operation. When Field Marshal Walter von Reichenau and General Karl-Heinrich von Stuelpnagel were using their armies to protect the flanks of von Kleist's thrusts, the 95th Infantry division was quickly activated into Barbarossa on June 27, and sent to the sector from Germany.³² In a sense, however, the divisions in Germany were in reserve and could be committed to the fray when needed, but by hauling these divisions over long distances the actively engaged armies were deprived of transportation that could have been used otherwise for the carrying of supplies.

While it cannot be conclusively proved that the Balkan campaign and its effect on men, machines, and equipment assigned to Barbarossa caused the defeat of Hitler in Russia, it must be concluded that it helped. True, the number of

³² Pieced together from Das Heer, p. 188; Clark, p. 53; and Hart, p. 177.

Germans participating and casualties suffered were not large when compared to the German-Russian campaign, but the German commitment of machines and equipment in the Balkans constituted a sizable percentage of the forces assigned to Barbarossa. Not only did these forces have to be moved out of the Balkans and be refitted for the Russian campaign but in some cases were missing entirely from the Russian operation.

From all indications, most of the losses in the Balkans of machines and equipment were never replaced for Barbarossa. The few mixed tank platoons sent to the eastern front came almost exclusively from France, as did the tanks of the Rumanian and Hungarian armored divisions appearing on the eastern front in 1941 and 1942.

Thus, the British did create a second front in the Balkans even before the German invasion of Russia. And though Churchill has been criticised for sending forces ~~that~~ allowed Rommel to overrun much of North Africa, his decision has to be considered as a factor in saving Russia from a possible defeat.

CHAPTER VII

POSSIBLE POSTPONEMENT OF BARBAROSSA DUE TO WEATHER

The area of eastern Poland and adjoining territories in western Russia is made up mainly of woodland and meadows with occasional low-rolling hills seldom exceeding two hundred feet in height. Small creeks and streams feed the tributaries which gradually descend to form the larger river systems of the area, such as the Vistula, the Nieman, and Dnieper. During the spring of each year, the entire feeder area is often inundated and filled with widespread tracts of marsh, especially in the regions supplying the larger rivers flowing north, such as the tributaries of the Vistula, the Nieman, and the Dvina. The flooding in the upper reaches is caused by the unmelted ice usually prevalent in the main river farther north, as well as the rapid thawing of the snow interspersed with the annual heavy spring rains.¹ The Vistula, for instance, in the vicinity of its tributary, the Bug, has been known to spread its waters

¹For a description of the area see: W. G. Kendrew, Climate of the Continents (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 28; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 9th ed., Vol XIX, p. 307.

as far as one hundred fifty miles east and west. Under these conditions, the headwaters of the Vistula are often difficult to distinguish from the headwaters of the Dnieper.²

During a normal year, a change of condition usually takes place by the second or third week in May. The heavy rains cease and the area enjoys a pleasant climate. The ground remains soft and boggy for several more weeks, but by mid-June the "ground (is usually) dry and will support vehicles of all types."³

It can therefore be safely assumed that even under normal conditions the Fuehrer would have been hard pressed to commence his invasion of Russia as early as May 16, 1941. But 1941, from all evidence, was not a normal year. Heinz Guderian, who would command one of Hitler's panzer divisions in the Russian invasion, claimed that "the spring of 1941 was exceptionally wet, and well into May, the Bug and its tributaries were at flood level."⁴ Guderian's view is supported by General Blumentritt, von Rundstedt's Chief of Staff, who stated that, "1941 was an exceptional year." Late in May,

²Encyclopaedia Britannica, 9th ed., Vol. XIX, p. 307.

³Kendrew, p. 28; German Preparations, p. 3. The quote is obtained from the latter source.

⁴Guderian, p. 145. He adds that he was in a position to personally observe the wet weather during his inspection tours in Poland.

"huge floods covered the land," and "at the beginning of June, the Bug . . . was overflowing its banks."⁵ The commander of the Luftwaffe in Poland, Albrecht Kesselring, complained that the heavy rain during the latter part of May was slowing construction of his deployment base which "could not be completed before the beginning of June."⁶

Further proof of abnormal weather conditions is supplied by the precipitation tables recorded in several cities of the immediate invasion area and its perimeter. Krynica, Poland, for instance, noted more precipitation during April, 1941, than was recorded by the city for any comparable April through 1950. Krynica also measured more precipitation during May, 1941, than any other May month through 1950.⁷ Wilno, U.S.S.R., also recorded abnormal precipitation during April and May, 1941;⁸ while Kiev, U.S.S.R., although outside of the initial invasion area, claimed more precipitation during May, 1941, than any comparable May month since 1922.⁹

⁵Blumentritt, p. 101.

⁶Albrecht Kesselring, Kesselring, A Soldier's Record (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1954), p. 95.

⁷U.S., Department of Commerce, Weather Bureau, World Weather Records 1941-1950 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), p. 746. Hereafter cited as World Weather Records.

⁸Ibid., p. 755.

⁹Ibid., p. 755.

The fact that much of the rain fell in the latter part of May in the area under discussion is again supported by Kesselring. The Luftwaffe commander returned to his deployment base on May 20. He spoke of the heavy "torrential rains" both prior to and after the date of his arrival.¹⁰ That this was probably the case can be substantiated further by a German report of mid-June, 1941, which stated that "depressions in the ground and gullies were partially muddy and swampy and impassable for motor vehicles. The low plains near the Bug river were partially covered with large marshes."¹¹ This is counter to the normal expectations of the area for that date.

What actual delay would have been caused by the weather if there had been no Balkan invasion is difficult to determine. Heinz Guderian doubted whether Hitler's Balkan invasion delayed Barbarossa "as much as six weeks, if at all."¹² General Buttlar, of the Wehrmacht, ventured that the invasion of Russia would have been impossible before mid-June, 1941.¹³ And Halder claimed that "the weather conditions were not suitable before the time

¹⁰Kesselring, p. 95.

¹¹German Preparations, p. 3.

¹²J. F. C. Fuller, A Military History of the Western World, Vol III, (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1956) p. 420.

¹³Freiherr von Buttlar, Ehrenbuch der Deutschen Wehrmacht (Stuttgart: Dr. Hans Reigler, 1954), p. 130.

when the invasion was actually launched."¹⁴ Other authors not so closely attached to the invasion of Russia have expressed their opinions on the subject. Most are indefinite on the actual time that could have been lost due to weather had there been no Balkan invasion. Some are more definite. Mueller-Hillebrand claimed that "without a doubt" the weather would have forced the invasion into the month of June,¹⁵ while Chester Wilmet stated flatly that "the weather was unfavorable for offensive operations from Poland at least until the second week of June."¹⁶

In the face of this evidence it appears safe to assume that Hitler could not have launched his invasion during May, 1941, with any real hope for a successful execution of his plans. The Fuehrer envisaged a quick strike by his dependable panzers based on large strategic movements and the defeat of the Russian armies "west of the Dnieper." It seems highly improbable that he would gamble on getting his tanks "stuck in the mud,"¹⁷ so early in the game.

Whether the Russian campaign could have taken place earlier in June can only be conjectured. Although the report

¹⁴Hart, p. 170.

¹⁵Das Heer, p. 86.

¹⁶Chester Wilmet, Struggle for Europe (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), p. 77.

¹⁷Words are Halder's used to describe the condition of the German panzers late in July.

of mid-June spoke of "depressions" and "gullies" being impassable by motor vehicles, it can probably be assumed that much of the remaining area was passable. The precipitation recordings of the cities in the area were normal during the month of June and in some instances below the average mean.¹⁸ Halder recorded on June 20, 1941, that the weather was favorable and the "rivers partly below normal,"¹⁹ indicating a rapid decline of water from the end of May. Furthermore, Guderian, in apparent contradiction to an earlier quote contributed by him, maintained "that there was a definite delay in the opening of our Russian campaign" caused by the Balkan invasions.²⁰ This implies that he thought the invasion could have taken place earlier in June (for he obviously discounted May).

Within the range of probabilities and eliminating the Fuehrer's intuition, the most logical conclusion seems to be that the invasion of Russia could not have commenced in May, 1941. It is also extremely doubtful that it could have taken

¹⁸World Weather Records, p. 746.

¹⁹Halder, Vol. VI, June 20, 1941.

²⁰Guderian, p. 145.

place during the first week in June. Therefore, the nonexecution of the Balkan invasions more likely could not have saved the Fuehrer's armies more than two weeks' operating time in the Soviet Union at the most. Moreover, this time could have been available to the German army only if the Fuehrer had decided against the Crete invasion as previous evidence indicates.

CHAPTER VIII

THE OCCUPATION OF GREECE AND YUGOSLAVIA (1941-1942) AND ITS EFFECT ON BARBAROSSA

Only three general areas in conquered Yugoslavia were of the utmost interest to the Fuehrer: Serbia proper, containing the rich copper-producing Mines de Bor, and a long stretch of the strategic Danube River;¹ the Banat, because of its rich soil and the large number of ethnic Germans residing in the area;² and the northern part of Slovenia because of its historical relationship with "old Austria" and its numerous Volksdeutschen. The Fuehrer made it clear even before the Yugoslav surrender that Serbia and the Banat were to be considered in the German sphere of interest and, therefore, would be occupied by the troops of the Reich. Later, after discussions with Mussolini, northern Slovenia, although not

¹The Fuehrer mentions the importance of these areas in "Directive 25". See: H. R. Trevor-Roper (ed. and trans.), Blitzkrieg to Defeat, Hitler's War Directive (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964), pp. 61-63.

²The Fuehrer was considering giving this territory to Hungary as late as March 27, 1941, but obviously changed his mind, Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, Vol. IV, p. 277.

formally annexed, was placed under the jurisdiction of the Gauleiter of the Austrian province of Styria.³

Otherwise, Yugoslavia had little of value that tempted the Fuehrer, especially with Barbarossa pending. Montenegro was mountainous and could scarcely feed its own population; this was declared an Italian protectorate. The more desirable areas of Dalmatia, a few districts and islands near Fiume, and the southern part of Slovenia were also granted to "Greater Rome." With the exception of southern Slovenia which produced a small food surplus, most of these new Italian territories were food deficit areas and produced very little of strategic value. Mountainous Macedonia, the "melting pot" of the Balkans, could not even support the occupation troops it would take to police it; the territory was given to Bulgaria for occupational purposes. The Voivodina, containing the fertile Bachka, in contrast probably tempted the Fuehrer, but it was granted to Hungary for historical reasons. A small slice of eastern Slovenia was also given to Hungary in recognition of her limited war effort on behalf of the Axis.

The remainder of Yugoslavia was established as the independent Kingdomⁿ of Croatia. The new country contained the

³Karl Brandt, Management of Agriculture and Food in the German-occupied and Other Areas of Fortress Europe. In collaboration with; Otto Schiller and Franz Angrim. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1953), p. 153.

fertile Syrmia located between the Drau and Sava rivers, but it was also granted the economically poor and food deficit areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In order to insure that the state operated in the best interests of the Reich, Hitler carved out a small section in the north, including the Syrmia, that would be occupied tentatively by German troops. The rest of Croatia was placed within the Italian sphere of interest, and as a further concession the "independent" country was recognized as an Italian satellite.⁴

Greece had even less to offer economically than Yugoslavia. The state had no important sources of raw materials, nor did she have any highly developed heavy industries. Moreover prior to the Italian invasion, the Greeks had been importing between 450,000 and 500,000 tons of wheat a year to feed their hungry population.⁵ The value of the tobacco, raisins, grapes, and olive oil only made up part of this deficit. Thus, the German objectives in Greece were almost entirely strategic. But even so, only the important naval base of Salonika and the surrounding area was exclusively occupied by the Germans. The Germans stationed troops in the Athens-Pireaus area, a few islands in the Peloponnese, and Crete, as did the Italians. Excepting Thrace and areas of Eastern Macedonia, which were

⁴The new state came into existence on May 3, 1941, in a joint decree by Italy and Germany, Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 235.

granted to, or to be occupied by Bulgaria, the rest of Greece was annexed by Italy, Italy's satellite Albania, or occupied by the Italians.

Even before the conquered Balkans were carved up and divided for the Axis feast, the Germans had suffered setbacks of near-disastrous proportions in Serbia. The Germans had been deprived of the full use of the Danube for several weeks due to the cement and other obstacles placed in the main channel.⁶ This undoubtedly affected the transfer of divisions and supplies for the Greece and Crete campaigns, and placed a severe strain on Field Marshal von Rundstedt's buildup in Rumania, as indicated by the great emphasis placed on this potential supply route by the Fuehrer.⁷ Moreover, the Bor copper mines, controlled by the Preussische Staatsbank,⁸ were put out of commission by the Yugoslavs at least until August, 1941. There is no doubt as to the value of these mines to the German war effort. The mines produced nearly 40,000 tons of copper a year and were Europe's biggest single supplier of the precious metal.⁹ The Germans were forced to rely on current

⁶Hassel, May 5, 1941.

⁷Ibid.: Blumentritt, p. 101.

⁸The mines were at one time controlled by the Banque Maribeu of Paris, but after the French defeat were ceded to Goering and came under the control of the Preussisch Staatsbank.

⁹Cleona Lewis, Nazi Europe and World Trade. Assisted by John C. McClelland. (Washington: The Booking Institution, 1941), p. 87.

stockpiles which would last only a few weeks, utilize substitutes, and/or make arrangements with France's Spain for the export of more copper by that country to Germany,¹⁰

By the time the maximum performance transportation schedule for the eastern front went into effect, the Danube was restored to full use.¹¹ At the same time, the re-organization of the Serbian state for the complete benefit of the German war economy was being carried out. The Serbian towns were placed under the control of local German commanders, and local police forces largely controlled by the SS were organized to help keep order and lighten the German tasks in the area. A border guard unit made up of 2,000 Serbians (later expanded to 5,000) and containing a cadre of 600 Germans was formed.¹² The economic affairs of the area were placed in the hands of Franz Neuhauser, Goering's plenipotentiary for the Four Year Plan.¹³ Already by mid-June, with the aid of many of the

¹⁰The importance of the Bor mines to the German war effort can not be over-emphasized. War with England and the resulting blockade shut off all imports from abroad. War with Russia closed that source of the metal also. See; Hassell, May 5, 1941; Halder Vol. VI, May 12, 1941; Lukacs, pp. 93 and 76B.

¹¹The maximum performance schedule went into effect on May 23, 1941. See "Chapter III," p. 62.

¹²German Antiguerrilla Operations, p. 19.

¹³U.S., Foreign Economic Administration. German Penetration of Corporate Holdings in Serbia, (Division Affairs Information Guide; Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1944), p. 2.

released Yugoslav prisoners, a number of the former Yugoslav war industries were converted to German specifications and were producing war material for the Reich.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the rich agricultural area of the Banat was given a special status in German plans because of the large number of inhabitants of German descent. The Volksduetschen, with the aid of the SS, were allowed to form their own local administrations and largely control their own local affairs as long as they operated in the best interests of the occupying power.¹⁵

However, the majority of the inhabitants of Serbia and the Banat were Slavs and, therefore, looked upon as being ohne Kulture, especially by Himmler's SS who often operated independently, and sometimes in defiance of, the military commander. Moreover, the occupying powers were "living off the land" and, in the beginning at least, the Serbs had to meet the demands of a number of uncoordinated agencies, such as the commander of the Southwest theatre, the military governor of the Southwest, the higher echelons of the SS and chief of police, as well as the demands of the Four Year Plan.¹⁶ This led to over-requisitioning of a number of Serb families who were consequently left to starve. Even so, for the first two months

¹⁴Such as subsidiaries of the Herman Goering Steel Works at Coka, and Herz and Son Company at Carlsdorf.

¹⁵Brandt, p. 155.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 163.

at least, the Germans got what they wanted, with the exception of copper, since all economic plans for the area were fulfilled.¹⁷

In contrast to Serbia, the Germans, occupying their areas of interest in Greece, were quite lenient. In order to make foreign rule more acceptable to the Greeks, a prominent Greek personality, General George Tsolakoglou, was selected as the puppet premier. In turn, in order to win support or at least toleration by the Greek people, Tsolakoglou conducted a vigorous campaign based on anti-Slavism and anti-Communism. Even though this was aimed partially at Germany's ally, Bulgaria, the Germans did not seem to mind since the propaganda implied that the Wehrmacht was present to protect the country from these dual scourges.¹⁸

The major problem faced by the Germans and their Italian allies in Greece was the hungry population. Even before the war, the Greeks had to import large quantities of grain, and in 1940 the British blockade and the German hegemony in the Balkans had cut off imports. This problem was compounded by the Italian invasion. During the winter of 1940-1941, thousands of Greek refugees had poured into Athens, Salonika, and Piraeus. Stark tragedy struck these unfortunate hordes as death and disease rates shot skyward.¹⁹

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Stavrianos, p. 785.

¹⁹Brandt, p. 235.

Accordingly, the German and Italian troops were forbidden by army order to claim any food provisions from the Greek population.²⁰ At the same time, Hermann Neubacher, Goering's representative in Greece, tried to find some solution that might make Greece more self-sustaining, but the task was to prove impossible.²¹ Meanwhile, the individual German soldier was spending his freshly minted marks for everything the Greeks had to offer. This later brought forth the following comment from Count Ciano:

The Germans have taken from the Greeks even their shoelaces, and now they pretend to place the blame for the economic situation on us. We can take the responsibility but only on condition that they clear out of Athens and the entire country.²²

Already during June and July, 1941, the Germans and the Italians were forced to send wheat to Greece. This was only the beginning.

In the new country of Croatia, the throne was offered to the Duke of Spoleto, a member of the Italian House of Savoy. The Duke accepted the position, but found the pleasures of Rome hard to resist and therefore never assumed the royal office.²³ Ante Pavelitch, arriving in Croatia with

²⁰Ibid., p. 238.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ciano, November 4, 1941.

²³Stavrianos, p. 771.

fewer than 100 of his Ustascha, was installed as the Fuehrer, of poglavnik (prime minister) of Croatia.²⁴ Much of the captured Yugoslav equipment was made available to him, and he quickly organized a political army of fifteen battalions, a Ustascha Guard of one infantry regiment, and a cavalry squadron.²⁵ He also made a provision for a national draft but was confronted with a manpower shortage. The Germans siphoned off 150,000 Croat workers to be used for industry in the Reich.²⁶ The Germans were moreover, busy recruiting foreign legion units within the country.²⁷ The Germans in both categories only accepted the young and healthy.

The slogan of the new Pavelitch regime was "Ready for the Fatherland,"²⁸ which meant literally that there was no room for Serbians in the Croatian state. The Ustascha accordingly set out to exterminate one portion of the Serbian population and tried to force the other to become Croatian. The resulting carnage was so horrible that even the Germans

²⁴German Antiguerrilla Operations, p. 18.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Halder, Vol. VI, June 7, 1941.

²⁷German Antiguerrilla Operations, p. 19.

²⁸Stavrianos, p. 772.

protested to the incredible cruelties perpetrated by the Croats.²⁹ At the same time, although the Hungarians in the Viovodina and the Bulgars in Macedonia did not shed quite so much blood, they used every conceivable pressure to convince and compel the population in each of the respective areas to regard themselves as Hungarian or Bulgarian.

The Serbs and their allies (usually Orthodox or Jew) retaliated with a little blood-letting of their own. This was made at least partially possible because of the short duration of the Yugoslav campaign and the rapid re-deployment of German divisions for use in Barbarossa. Many of the more mountainous areas of southern Yugoslavia were by-passed by the invading armies, with the result that well-armed but disorganized units of the former Yugoslav army were left in the mountains to come down later to surrender or fend for themselves. Many turned to the latter course and began operating as small bandit bands. Toward the end of June, 1941, these bands were being collectively formed into two separate cohesive armies of irregulars: a Serbian nationalist organization (Chetniks) under the leadership of Colonel Draza Mihailovitch, and a Communist organization (Partisans) led by Josip Broz (Tito).

²⁹Glaise-Horstenu to the Croatian marshal Pavelic Kvaternik, said, "that in late years (he) had lived through a great many things of this kind, but nothing that could compare with the misdeeds of the Croats." Quoted from: Hassell, August 2, 1941.

On July 13, a Montenegrin mixture of Partisan and Chetniks swarmed down on the Italian garrisons scattered throughout their mountain state.³⁰ Taken by surprise, the Italians soon after counterattacked with strong ground, naval, and air force units but require almost a year to put down the uprisings and managed to accomplish it only by enlisting the aid of the Chetniks, who, in the meantime, had turned into bitter enemies of the Partisans. Stipulations in the agreement with the Chetniks required the Italians to restrict themselves to the garrison town and main transportation and communication lines. In return the Chetniks promised to keep the countryside free of Partisans, with the guns and ammunition provided for the task by the Italians.³¹ The Italians suffered "several thousand" casualties in this little war and in return captured 10,000 Partisans who were shipped to force labor camps.³²

Other occupied areas of Yugoslavia were also feeling the vengeance of the rapidly expanding guerrilla armies. By early August, 1941, the Croats were practically forced out of Bosnia, large areas in Macedonia were proving unsafe for the Bulgars, and the Italians were faced with another possible

³⁰German Antiguerilla Operations, p. 21.

³¹Ibid., p. 22. The Chetniks also found a new source for arms, much to the dismay of Pavelitch.

³²Ibid.

Subsidiary war in southern Slovenia.

In contrast, the Germans were not severely harassed by the guerrillas during the first three months of their occupation in Serbia and Croatia, even though the four German security divisions appeared to invite trouble because of their weakness.³³ Instead, in these areas the guerrillas seemed content to organize during this period and wait to take positive action only when their units were large enough to insure a measure of success. Finally, early in August, 1941, Tito moved from Belgrade to Valjevo to take personal command of the Partisans in the field.³⁴ This appeared to be the signal for the beginning of major operations against the Germans. The intensity of these attacks by the "irregulars" is indicated by the reports sent to Field Marshal List, German commander of the Southeast theatre, during August, 1941; August 4, rail traffic from Belgrade to Valjevo was temporarily halted because of a blown up bridge; August 5, a band is planning an attacking Valjevo on the night of August 5 to 6, or the following night; August 7, Bogatic, the district capital and district office was raided by Communists; August 8, cases of Communist sabotage and raids are increasing; August 9, railroad train moving from Cacak to Belgrade was attacked;

³³Trials of War Criminals, Vol. II, p. 936. Only a few occasions of bottles of gasoline hurled at German vehicles were recorded during July, 1941.

³⁴Stavrianos, p. 772; German Antiguerrilla Operations, p. 21.

August 15, railway station attacked, train derailed; August 18, twenty miles of track blown up; August 22, Loznica firmly held by Communists.³⁵

The disturbed Fuehrer, on the recommendation of Field Marshal List, in an apparent attempt to split the "irregulars" of Tito and Mahailovitch, now consented to meet, at least partially, the demands of a number of Chetniks. On August 31, he allowed General Milan Neditch to form a "Government of National Salvation" even though the Serbian general maintained that he was the caretaker of the government until the king could be restored.³⁶ At the same time, the Fuehrer made it clear that Communism was to be fought in the area through the help of the nationally minded Chetniks and that "pamphlets originating from the Chetniks were not to be prevented" from being distributed.³⁷ At almost the same time, Field Marshal List dispatched ten Stuka dive bombers from Greece to be used against the Partisans.³⁸

³⁵Trials of War Criminals, Vol. XI, pp. 939-944.

³⁶Stavrianos, p. 772.

³⁷Trials of War Criminals, Vol. XI, p. 945.

³⁸German Antiguerrilla Operations, p. 22, implies that the Stukas were sent later in September, but this is obviously wrong since they were being used as early as September 5, 1941. See: Trials of War Criminals, Vol. XI, p. 953.

In spite of these German measures, the gloomy reports continued. For instance, on September 5, the following messages were received at List's headquarters: four additional railway lines were destroyed and armed bands were preventing repairs; fighting near Loznica continues, dive-bombers went into action several times, Krupanj appears lost, stuka attacks were able to free part of the units cut off at Krapanj, our own losses are not yet known.³⁹ That same day, List ordered the 125th Infantry regiment then stationed in Salonika to entrain for Belgrade immediately. At the same time, he complained to the Fuehrer about the inadequacy of the occupational troops under his command to handle the situation.⁴⁰

The report from List, coupled with the information that the installations of the Bor mines had been destroyed and the mines would have to be closed temporarily for repairs (just after the Germans had the mines producing copper again), spurred the Fuehrer into action. He issued a directive charging Marshal List with suppressing the revolt in the South-east. To accomplish this, List was to place General Boehme in complete charge of the operations in Serbia and the adjacent areas where the irregulars had established themselves. The Army High Command was ordered to reinforce the troops in Serbia.

³⁹Trials of War Criminals, Vol. XI, p. 953.

⁴⁰German Antiguerrilla Operations, pp. 22-23.

by one infantry division, armoured trains, captured tanks, and further security forces; other captured tanks and security forces were to be sent to Croatia. Another infantry division from the Eastern front was to be transferred when it became available. The Hungarian, Rumanian, and Bulgarian forces were to be called on to assist in the operations with the permission of the Armed Forces High Command. At the same time the use of Croatian forces in the German zone of interest adjacent to the Serbian border was approved.

The carrying out of this directive followed swiftly. Three days later (September 19), the mountain specialist, General Boehme, assumed command in Belgrade. Less than one week later the 342d Infantry division, journeying from the West to the Eastern front was detoured into the Balkans.⁴² This resulted in the Germans having one less division available for the drive on Moscow (Operation Typhoon). By the use of ruthless methods, the aid of still another infantry division (113th) transferred from Rumania,⁴³ and the open warfare between the Chetniks and the Partisans, General Boehme could report by mid-December that the open revolt in Serbia was over. Boehme then transferred his forces to Croatia, but toward the end of January, the general, along with the 113th and 342d

⁴¹Ibid., p. 23.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid., p. 24.

Infantry divisions, was transferred to the Eastern front. The guerrillas still held large areas in Bosnia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Italian Slovenia, but for the time being they were not operating on a large scale in Serbia. General Boehme's forces had killed an estimated 50,000 irregulars from the beginning of their operations. No prisoners were taken, or at least none were recorded.⁴⁴

To make up for the departure of the German divisions from Serbia, the Germans allowed the Bulgarians to occupy south Serbia, and strengthened their own forces by recruiting an SS Mountain division (7th) made up of ethnic Germans from the occupied areas.⁴⁵ Except for minor flare-ups, guerrilla operations in Serbia were relatively suppressed until after Stalingrad.

Unlike those in Yugoslavia, the Greek guerrillas undertook no operations of importance in 1941, and only a few that could be deemed important in 1942.⁴⁶ For their part, the Germans were more concerned with fortifying Crete, pursuing the war effort against the British in the eastern Mediterranean from Greek bases, and getting all German combat units that could be spared to the more active theatres of war. In August

⁴⁴German Antiguerrilla Operations, p. 27.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 26 and 30. On November 25, 1942, the Greek guerrillas blew up the Gorgopotamos Bridge, forcing the Germans to replace the Italian divisions in the policing of this stretch of transportation.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 28.

1941, the 6th Mountain division was sent to the Russian front. The division was replaced in Greece by the weak 713th Infantry division brought in from Germany.⁴⁷ In late October, 1941, the 5th Mountain division was also transferred for use in Russia. The division was replaced on Crete by the 164th and the 713th Infantry divisions from the Athens and Salonika areas. They were in turn replaced in the Athens area by Italians.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, the Greek occupation was costly for the Germans and their Italian allies. In spite of Hermann Goering's remark that the Germans should not preoccupy themselves with the Greeks ("certain people are destined to be decimated"⁴⁹), the Greeks had to be fed. The Germans, in the beginning, attempted to hand over this problem to the Italians. The Italians, already existing on black bread and brown pasta and losing half their ships bound for Pireaus and Salonika, found the task impossible. Consequently, in November, 1941, the Germans began sending large quantities of grain to Greece. By the time the terrible winter of 1941-42, was over, the Germans had shipped over 45,000 tons of wheat to the country and the Italians well over 20,000 tons.⁵⁰ In spite of these

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 16 and Lukacs, p. 447.

⁴⁸German Antiguerrilla Operations, p. 16.

⁴⁹Lukacs, p. 458.

⁵⁰Brandt, p. 247.

Axis contributions, the Greek population might well have been nearly decimated except for the International Red Cross. Through its efforts, a total of 40,000 tons of food was moved outside Axis Europe into Greece.⁵¹ Due to international agreements German and Italian exports to Greece were to be decreased during the following year. Even so, from September, 1942, to August, 1943, the Germans requisitioned only 24 thousand tons of food from Greece and in turn compensated the Greeks with 45.9 thousand tons. The Italians, during the same period, gained 9.8 million tons of food from Greece and sent to the Greeks 16.2 million tons.⁵²

Due to the Italian disaffection and the guerrilla warfare in both Greece and Yugoslavia, the Germans were forced to increase their occupation forces up to fourteen divisions by September, 1943, and to twenty divisions by the end of the same year.⁵³ This, however, was after Stalingrad and when Germany's chances for a victory over Russia were very remote. But, without considering the possible strategic value of Crete and the German airfields in Greece, there can be no doubt that the German occupation in the Balkans during 1941 and 1942, had an adverse effect on the German war effort in Russia. The serious drain on the food resources of the Reich

⁵¹Brandt, p. 239. From the summer of 1941 to the summer of 1942.

⁵²Ibid., p. 243.

⁵³German Antiguerrilla Operations, p. 70.

for the feeding of the Greek people without any just compensation is one large reason. There are others.

Halder had maintained, as early as 1940, that Yugoslavia "was 100% at the disposal of the German war economy,"⁵⁴ yet, because of the Yugoslav invasion the Bor mines were lost to the German war effort for a good part of 1941, and the Danube River was of little use during a crucial stage in the preparations for the Russian war.⁵⁵ Although the Germans in Serbia and the Banat filled all their requisition quotas during the first three months of the occupation, the "subsidiary war" during the latter part of the year made collections in many cases impossible. To be sure, during 1942 all German economic plans were largely fulfilled in Serbia and the Banat, but it is interesting to note that the 181,000 tons of grain shipped to the Reich from these areas in the grain year 1941-1942, were less than the 189,000 tons sent to Germany from the same areas in the grain year 1939-1940.⁵⁶

In a sense, Croatia appeared to be a valuable German ally since she contributed a number of badly needed workers for the industries of the Reich. Moreover, she allowed the Germans to recruit Foreign Legion units within the new state,

⁵⁴Halder, Vol. VI, September 3, 1941.

⁵⁵Because of the transfer of divisions from the Balkans.

⁵⁶Brandt, p. 183.

such as the 369th, 373d, and 392d Infantry regiments, two SS regiments, and the 13th and 23d Mountain regiments, as well as a number of battalions and brigades.⁵⁷ Possibly the Croat workers aided the German war effort, but the over-all effect of the Foreign Legion units, as far as the Russian war was concerned, was limited. The Germans only used one Croat regiment in 1941 and less than a division of Croat regulars in 1942 on the Russian front.⁵⁸ Most of the rest of the Croat units were used to combat the guerrillas in the Balkans. Although Croatia contributed to the German war economy by exporting small quantities of lumber, tanning bark, and bauxite, these exports amounted to less than before the Yugoslav invasion. Moreover, the bitter internecine combat within the state immobilized a good share of the rest of her economy. The result was that the lone credit item in the Croatian food-trade ledger with Germany consisted of a small oilseed export.

The Fuehrer had hoped that the German invasion of Greece and Yugoslavia would free Italian troops for duty elsewhere, preferably North Africa, but these desires were only partially realized. Prior to the German invasion, the Italians had

⁵⁷German Antiguerrilla Operations, pp. 18-19.

⁵⁸Das Heer, p. 113; Clark, p. 258.

⁵⁹Brandt, p. 160.

forty-five divisions in Albania, Greece, and stationed along the Yugoslav frontier. As late as the summer of 1942, they still had thirty-two divisions in Greece and the conquered areas of Yugoslavia. Only twelve of these divisions were occupying Greece.⁶⁰ Had there not been a Yugoslav invasion, it seems doubtful that the Italians would have needed twenty divisions to guard the frontier opposite Yugoslavia.

It could be contended that Hungary might not have joined in the war with Russia as a German ally had Yugoslavia not been invaded. Hungary's quarrels were with Yugoslavia over the Bachka, Baranja, and the Banat, not with Russia. As early as December 5, 1940, Hitler had discounted Hungary as a possible ally in the Russian war for this very reason.⁶² However, the Hungarians had signed a nonaggression pact with the Yugoslavs on December 12, 1940,⁶³ and moreover the state was a member of the Anti-Comintern Pact and the Axis Tripartite Pact. The Germans had already established command posts at Hungary's principal railroad stations, airports, and other strategic points giving her a measure of control within the country long before the Yugoslav invasion. It is quite doubtful that the Yugoslav invasion changed the Hungarian

⁶⁰German Antiguerrilla Operations, pp. 14-15.

⁶¹Brandt, p. 160.

⁶²Halder, Vol. VI, December 5, 1941.

⁶³Lukacs, p. 371.

attitude toward the Russians. It is more probable that Hungry would have contributed the two token divisions at the beginning of Barbarossa anyway, and would have been forced to contribute more later, just as happened during the winter of 1941-1942.

To be sure, the German commitment of troops in the Balkans was very small when compared with the forces used in Barbarossa. The Germans never had more than eight and one-third divisions occupying Greece and Yugoslavia. Four, and later five, of these divisions were weak security divisions made up of men over thirty-five using captured equipment. But this does not tell the complete story. Counting the unattached units, there were 118,078 Germans on occupation duty in Greece and Yugoslavia, and this did not include units of the Luftwaffe or German naval personnel stationed in Salonika, Pireaus, and Crete.⁶⁴

The most tangible proof that the Balkan occupation had an effect on Barbarossa is the fact that guerrilla warfare broke out soon after the German divisions had departed for re-deployment in Barbarossa. By being preoccupied with the approaching campaign against the Soviet Union, large areas of Yugoslavia were obviously left unpacified. This lead the Germans to commit two divisions earmarked for the Russian campaign stukas, artillery trains, captured tanks, ammunition,

⁶⁴German Antiguerrilla Operations, p. 16.

and fuel at a time when Germany could least afford them. To be sure, the expenditure in the Balkans was very small when compared to the German needs in Russia. But at a time when many German infantry divisions were reduced to less than half their strength and there was a shortage of 200,000 men in Russia,⁶⁵ even one fresh division on the eastern front would have been appreciated. The importance of one division can be indicated by the emphasis Halder placed on trying to get the 164th Infantry division for Barbarossa.⁶⁶

Thus, the German policy in the conquered areas of the Balkans was to divide and rule, while saving the choicest portions of economic value for occupation by the troops of the Reich. This was supposed to free German troops for employment in Barbarossa and still allow Germany to reap the economic harvest. In the end it did neither.

⁶⁵This shortage was noted by Halder in mid-September, 1941.

⁶⁶Halder, Vol. VI, June 21, 1941.

CHAPTER IX

BALKAN CAMPAIGN AS A DIVERSION

The German operation in the Balkans in the spring of 1941 appeared to be successful in diverting world attention from the German buildup in Poland. Coinciding as it did with General Erwin Rommel's advance in the North African desert, the German campaign in the Balkans seemed to indicate Hitler's plans of expansion were directed toward the eastern Mediterranean. The airborne seizure of Crete seemed to confirm the opinion that Hitler was bent on taking the Suez Canal by a combined air, sea, and ground operation. The Soviet Union did not appear to be an exception to this view, in spite of the close proximity of German troops along her borders. On the contrary, the entire Balkan campaign from the moment of its inception, in many respects appeared as an aid to the Fuehrer in reaching his military decision with Russia.

Already, by early September, 1940, Hitler had initiated the transfer of large bodies of German troops from western Europe to the eastern frontier. The German army was recording at the same time that "These regroupings must not create the impression in Russia that we are preparing an offensive in the

east."¹ Thus Hitler maintained that the troops were being transferred merely for the protection of Germany's vital Rumanian oil supply and other Balkan raw material sources.² The Vienna Award and the Axis guarantee for the territorial integrity of Rumania tended to substantiate this view. Later, when German troops entered Rumania early in October, 1941, with secret orders to "prepare the Rumanian army for a possible war with Russia," Stalin was informed that German troops were training the Rumanians to make them more self-reliant.³ When Stalin, at the same time, complained of the presence of German troops in other areas along the Russo-German frontier, Hitler had the view sifted back to Moscow that these troops were a deliberate attempt "to divert British attention from an imminent invasion of England!"⁴ Halder meanwhile noted that this latter view "could not be maintained indefinitely."⁵

Therefore, the inept Italian invasion of Greece saved Germany from what might have been an embarrassing situation in light of Stalin's refusal to accept the Fuehrer's demands of November, 1940. The British presence in Crete and their offer of aid to the Greeks presented Hitler with the excuse he

¹Lukacs, p. 320.

²Halder, Vol. VI, August 31, 1940.

³International Military Tribunal, p. 53-c, and 171-c.

⁴German Campaign, p. 15; Halder, Vol. VI, October 4, 1940.

⁵Halder, Vol. VI, October 4, 1940.

needed to continue his buildup in the east. Thus, Stalin was informed by the Fuehrer that Germany was engaged in a "life and death struggle with Great Britain" and that the presence of the latter in the Balkans would not be tolerated.⁶ The Fuehrer added "That this should also be in the best interests of the USSR."⁷ Hitler did not wait for Stalin's reply, since thousands of German troops were already converging on Rumania.⁸

Then while Britain was demonstrating that she was not beaten and was moreover practically on Stalin's doorstep, the German buildup along Soviet northern frontiers could logically be explained. The troops in these areas were a necessary precaution against possible Soviet intervention or aggression while German military units moved through Bulgaria and/or Yugoslavia to drive the British from Greece. Already in 07 November, 1940, Stalin had insisted that Bulgaria was in the Soviet sphere of influence, called Yugoslavia a "very close friend," and hinted at a possible Russian annexation of Finland.⁹ Hitler, among other items, made it clear at

⁶Ibid., November 16, 1940.

⁷Lukacs, p. 355.

⁸On the grounds that the "Reich's oil supply was beyond discussion." For an excellent discussion of this period of German-Soviet relations, see: Gustav Hilger and Alfred Meyer, pp. 318-324.

⁹Halder, Vol. VI, November 26, 1940; Lukacs, p. 336.

the time that he "would not stand for a renewal of the Russo-Finnish War."¹⁰

Thus, while the British were calling for an Anglo-Soviet alliance and the British presence in the Balkans appeared to make Stalin's demands even bolder, for Germany not to have large bodies of troops in the northeast while engaging the British in the southeast would be considered gross foolishness even by the most naive of statesmen. Stalin and Molotov did not appear to fit the latter definition. Hence the Germans were able to mask their true intentions in the east because of the British presence in the Balkans and by so doing send almost 100 divisions to the eastern frontiers without considerably shocking the Russians.¹¹

The Balkan campaigns continued to mask Hitler's true intention. In spite of the large number of German troops stationed along the Soviet frontier, Stalin and Molotov applied relentless military pressure on the Germans right up to the time of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Russian troop movements toward the frontier area were very frequent and, judging from Halder's diary, causing a great deal of concern among the German General Staff.¹² In other areas of harassment the Russians had found it necessary to cut

¹⁰Halder, Vol. VI, November 16, 1940.

¹¹Tippelskirch, p. 209.

¹²Halder, Vol. VI, April 4, 5, and 7.

down on the shipment of food and raw materials to Germany at convenient times during the crisis;¹³ had signed a treaty of friendship and nonaggression with the new Yugoslav government after the "coup"; had also signed a treaty of nonaggression with Turkey;¹⁴ and, it was rumored, had aided the Greeks with food and raw materials.¹⁵ In the face of this "obvious belligerent attitude," the Reich informed the Soviets that the German troops on the Russian frontier "were a necessary precaution." Hitler remained vague on how the Russians could remedy the situation.¹⁶

An additional means of diverting world attention was caused by the immense possibilities created by the German conquest in the Balkans. The repercussions of the victory appeared to be reverberating throughout the Middle East. Iraq was in revolt, Palestine was in a state of unrest, and even the Fascists in Abyssinia were reported stirring.¹⁷ Moreover, General Erwin Rommel was on the offensive in Egypt. The successful German invasion of Crete furthermore stirred the imagination. Possibly the Germans would use the combined air, sea, and land operations against the Suez Canal,

¹³Lukacs, p. 348. However, after April 4, the deliveries were more prompt.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶The Grand Alliance, pp. 306-307.

¹⁷All this is contained in Halder, Vol. VI, May 16, 1941.

Gibraltar, and maybe England herself. Paul Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi propaganda chief, hinted at all of these possibilities in an article in the Deutsche Beobachter under the title "The Example of Crete." The entire edition containing the article was confiscated on security grounds, which tended to make the notions presented even more authentic.¹⁸ The effect of the latter diversion on the leaders in the Kremlin can only be estimated, but at least one author has suggested that "the peasant logic of Stalin's mind" could not imagine how Hitler could defeat Britain by attacking Russia.¹⁹

Meanwhile Hitler continued his eastern buildup. During May and June, 1941, repeated warnings were sent to the Kremlin leaders by officials in London and Washington warning Stalin of the impending German invasion. One British official in Moscow even fixed the correct date.²⁰ Stalin dismissed these warnings by apparently insisting that the German troop concentrations were nothing more than "a war of nerves" by which the Reich hoped to win more economic concessions from the Russians.²¹ Stalin had already commenced his appeasement policy toward the Fuehrer. On May 6, he dismissed Molotov as his premier and assumed the job himself on the grounds

¹⁸Walter, Goerlitz, History of the German General Staff (New York: Frederic A. Praeger, Inc., 1953), p. 394.

¹⁹Lukacs, p. 318.

²⁰Anders, p. 31; Shirer, p. 844.

²¹Anders, p. 31.

that Molotov was the main cause for bad relations between Germany and Russia.²² The shipment of food and raw materials from the Soviet Union became almost unbelievably prompt. At the same time he dropped hints that the Russians might be interested in expanding these trade agreements.²³ Hitler remained strangely quiet. The German troops were still arriving at their frontier stations. Stalin, now possibly thinking that the position of the Soviet troops was the cause of the German attitude, ordered his troops ten kilometers back from the Soviet borders in the west and forbade his planes to fly within twenty kilometers of the Soviet-German frontier.²⁴ Still no response from the Nazi dictator. Finally, on June 14, in what appeared to be a last minute attempt to divert disaster, after publically repudiating the warnings from London and Washington, Stalin hinted at a possible meeting to discuss Soviet-German differences. For the next few days rumors were spreading in Germany of a possible visit of Stalin to Berlin.²⁵ Then on June 22, 1941, the lightning struck.

There is little doubt about the complete surprise achieved by the German forces. A report of the German Naval

²²Shirer, p. 841.

²³Ibid., p. 840.

²⁴Garthoff, p. 434-435.

²⁵Goerlitz, p. 394.

High Command stated on June 21 that "Reconnaissance of the Baltic area show no Russian readiness, no symptoms that the Russians are set for imminent German operations,"²⁶ Halder reported on the day of the invasion that the "Russians were not in tactical positions for defense. The troops in the border zone were widely scattered in their quarters. The frontier itself was for the most part lightly guarded."²⁷

Whether Hitler could have moved 141 divisions and still achieved surprise without the Balkan campaign acting as a shield for his activities can only be conjectured.

This surprise achieved by the Fuehrer has an interesting sequel however. Hitler, in all his plans for an invasion of Russia, insisted that the Russian armies must be destroyed west of the Dnieper. It was further anticipated that the Russians would commit almost all of their troops along the western border of Russia. In regard to this perhaps we should note the words of Eric von Hassel, on June 15, seven days before the crucial invasion:

The Russians seem to realize what is up and are beginning to withdraw their poorly placed cordons of troops and concentrate them in the rear. The prospects of a German victory are still naively considered by the German soldiers as bright.²⁸

In light of the lessons learned in Yugoslavia, one wonders if the Russian bear was sleeping so soundly after all!!

²⁶Lukacs, p. 410.

²⁷Halder, Vol. VI, June 22, 1941.

²⁸Hassel, June 15, 1941.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

In light of the evidence presented, neither the invasion of continental Greece nor Yugoslavia caused a delay in the launching of Barbarossa. Although the Fuehrer had postponed the Russian invasion "up to four weeks" to allow the invasion of Yugoslavia, German operations against the Soviet Union could not have commenced before at least the second week in June because of the weather conditions in eastern Europe during the spring of 1941. All evidence indicates that the German divisions used in both of the previously mentioned campaigns could have been re-deployed by this time had there not been an invasion of Crete or if the Fuehrer had not decided against their earlier removal. Only by not undertaking the invasion of Crete could the German armies conceivably have saved operating time in the Soviet Union before the advent of the Russian winter, 1941.

Even so, Mussolini's thrust of his blunt sword across the Albanian frontier into Greece must be considered a factor in Hitler's defeat in Russia. Actually Hitler had little choice in the matter of launching a campaign in the Balkans.

Once the Duce had committed his blunder and had suffered severe reverses, Hitler felt obliged to rescue his brother-in-arms. Aside from reasons of prestige, the Fuehrer's decision was forced by the British occupation of the islands off the coast of Greece and their political activities in the Balkans. In effect, Great Britain had created a second front even before the first front in Russia materialized. The Fuehrer realized that the Balkans had to be stabilized quickly, or there could not be an invasion of Russia in 1941, and 1942 might be too late. The United States would probably enter the war by then and Russia would be a much stronger opponent, as indicated by her growing armies and production figures.

In the beginning the Fuehrer considered sending three German divisions to Albania. These were to counter the potential British Balkan threat and bolster the Italian armies in the area. But more likely the British would have countered this strategic move with forces of their own joining the Greeks. The Italo-Greek war might have remained stalemated while the German forces were preparing to invade Russia. Later the Fuehrer decided to detach eight German divisions from Barbarossa to be used in a Greek campaign. However, with other German divisions moving to their concentration areas opposite the Russian frontier this could have had disastrous consequences if the German invasion were halted in Greece.

Yugoslavia, still an uncertain factor, might have allied itself with the Greeks and the British, and Barbarossa would have had to be postponed, possibly indefinitely. The solution of invading Yugoslavia as well as Greece had the advantage that it probably would be quick, would eliminate all unknown quantities on Germany's flank, and would allow a German invasion of Russia in 1941.

Even before the Yugoslav "coup," the Fuehrer had sent five panzer and over twelve other divisions into Bulgaria with the major assignment of driving the British threat from the Balkans. They were to be assisted in this project by 500 German aircraft in Rumania and Bulgaria. Then following the Fuehrer's decision to include Yugoslavia in his march of conquest, another nine divisions, including two panzer, all of which were on their way to the concentration areas for Barbarossa or whose departure was imminent, were diverted to the frontier opposite Yugoslavia. Other forces were sent to the Rumanian-Yugoslav border, while Goering had an additional 600 planes made available for the expanded Balkan operation. In percentages, this amounted to a commitment of over one third of the German aircraft and a little less than one third of the tanks assigned to Barbarossa.

Fortunately (or possibly unfortunately) for the Germans, the Yugoslav and Greek operations ran according to or ahead of schedule. The Yugoslav campaign ended quickly, and besides

wear and tear on equipment, German losses were almost negligible. Soon after the conclusion of the campaign the panzer divisions were withdrawn for re-fitting. The German campaign in Greece met stiffer opposition. The Germans were deprived of thirty to forty tanks and 100 planes intended for use in Barbarossa before it was concluded.

Many German generals were displeased with the Fuehrer's decision to invade Crete. Because of the impending invasion of Russia, they felt that the Germans should not extend their forces more than was absolutely necessary to secure the Balkan flank. The Crete invasion they argued, was not necessary to that end. The British could not use the island as a springboard to the continent since their land forces were at present too small and would remain so for some time. Halder argued against the Crete invasion by saying, "our danger is that we win all the battles but the last one";¹ leave the "Mediterranean to the Italians," implying perhaps that the last great battle was not going to be fought at Crete, Gibraltar, or the Suez, but possibly in Russia. Again the British intervened by destroying a large part of the Italian fleet at Matapan. Hitler then allowed himself to be persuaded by Goering, through Student, to invade Crete. In order to carry out this assignment, 520 transport planes were flown in, and the 7th Airborne division was brought into Greece from Rumania by truck.

¹Hart, p. 158.

Divisions scheduled for Barbarossa were left immobilized in Greece because of the congested transportation facilities. Before the battle of Crete ended, the Germans lost 130 transport planes, an estimated 125-150 other aircraft, and much of the 7th Airborne division. Moreover, besides possibly causing a delay in Barbarossa, the Crete victory gave the Germans the added responsibility of fortifying and manning the defenses of the island.

The battle of Crete was followed by a scramble of men and equipment to meet the June 22 Barbarossa deadline. Unfortunately, there was no hope that the 2d and 5th Panzer divisions could make it on time, but this mattered little since the 2d Panzer had lost a good share of its men and equipment to British torpedoes, and both divisions had to leave tanks and units for the defense of Greece and Crete. A number of divisions from the Balkans made the deadline, but four, besides the two panzer previously mentioned did not. Six other divisions, mainly from the west, could not make it either because of the transportation tie-up. The over a thousand aircraft used for the Crete campaign, since their ground crews had previously been sent to the Barbarossa concentration areas, either had to be re-fitted in Germany, or on arrival at their new bases. Many of these craft were not available for the beginning of Barbarossa.

After the British position in the Mediterranean was weakened, the Italians and the meager German forces under

Rommel began registering victories, while the German people cheered them on. Obviously, if only for reasons of prestige, this dashing German general had to be reinforced. Thus, for nearly two months the tank production of the Reich was "written off" for use in Barbarossa.

Barbarossa was launched. All along the line the Germans achieved surprise. Over 800 enemy aircraft were destroyed on the first day alone. The German panzer thrusts in most cases were rapid and deep. However, von Kleist's panzer army was brought to a virtual halt after the first three days. Toward mid-July, Halder was recording that "large bodies" of Russians were escaping to the rear, and "in every instance . . . if not all" the Russian armor was breaking out of encirclements.² The German objective of destroying the Russian armies west of the Dnieper failed. By September, the Germans had lost air superiority in the north to the Russians and Kesselring commented that the Luftwaffe was "simply overtaxed" and "at the end of their tether."³

It has often been asserted that the German offensive in Russia collapsed because of the conflict over the strategic concepts that broke out between Hitler, the German High Command, and the German generals, and that that controversy had cost the German army precious weeks. Additional time

²Halder, Vol. VI, July 11, 1941.

³Kesselring, pp. 101-102.

and manpower were wasted on Hitler's insistence on making Leningrad and the Ukraine his principal objectives. The long supply lines and wet weather also held up the German advance at crucial times. The validity of these arguments cannot be denied, but the fact remains that in the late fall 1941, the Germans were standing at the gates of Moscow, and the Russians had already scraped the bottom of the barrel for the defense of the city. Allen Clark describes the Russian situation:

There could be no more standing fast regardless of the consequences, no more trading lives for time while the reserves accumulated. Because there were no more reserves.⁴

No one can say positively, but there is a good possibility that just a few more men, tanks, and aircraft at crucial points during the German advance in Russia might have tipped the scales in Hitler's favor in spite of all other factors.

A few assume that the Germans and their allies gained from their invasion of the Balkans not only because of the strategic value of many of the areas under occupation, but because the entire economies of the conquered lands were entirely at their disposal. This assumption is only partially true. The gains (with the possible exception of Hungary) from an economic standpoint of the conquest and occupation of the Balkans were almost negligible for the

⁴Clark, p. 160.

Axis powers. This was especially so for the Germans. They lost the use of the Danube for a short crucial period, and nearly the entire copper production of the Ber mines for six months. Serbia and the Banat actually shipped more grain to Germany before the war than they did for a similar length of time during the occupation. The new state of Croatia, besides contributing 15,000 workers for the industries of the Reich, "contributed virtually nothing to the Axis war economy." Moreover, both Germany and Italy had to help feed Greece and the Greeks could make up only part of the deficit through their own production.

At the same time the area of responsibility for the Axis had been enlarged. To complicate matters, the speedy re-deployment of German divisions for Barbarossa made it impossible completely to disarm the enemy forces or comb out the mountain areas in which some of the stragglers found refuge. The result was an early rise of resistance and partisan movements which forced the Germans and their allies to strengthen their occupation forces in the area. The Italians had committed only thirty divisions for their invasion of Greece, but in 1942 they were using thirty-two divisions for the occupation of their acquisitions and areas of interest in the Balkans. The Germans were forced to increase their forces also, which was done largely at the expense of the eastern front.

In the final analysis the Balkan campaign affected the pending invasion of Russia in two spheres--economically and militarily. In the economic sphere, the invasion of Russia caused the Germans to lose their only reliable source of copper for six months. In Greece the needs of the people produced a food deficit for Germany to try to remedy. However, the economic influences would not have affected the Russian campaign to any appreciable extent. But militarily Barbarossa was weakened in three ways by the Balkan campaign. First it created a second front prior to the first front in Russia and, as already shown the losses to the Germans in the categories of men and especially tanks and planes, could have had an effect on the German effort in Russia. The Chetniks and Partisans operating chiefly in Yugoslavia were a second factor. The Germans were forced to use men and equipment allocated to the eastern front to contain their "activities." And third was the slight delay in the deployment of men and equipment to the staging areas caused chiefly by the German invasion of Crete.

APPENDIX
AND
BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDIX

GERMAN ARMY DIVISIONS, THEATRES OF WAR, ARMY COMMANDERS
AND ARMY GROUP COMMANDERS ON JUNE 22, 1941

A. Infantry Divisions,^a Light Divisions, and Security Divisions

No. of Div. & type	Theater of War	Commander	Army	Army Group	Commander
1 Inf.	East	Kuechler	18	North	Leeb
5 "	"	Hoth	3Pz	Center	Bock
6 "	"	Hoth	3Pz	Center	Bock
7 "	"	Kluge	4	Center	Bock
8 "	"	Strauss	9	Center	Bock
9 "	"	Reichenau	6	South	Rundstedt
10 "	"	Kuechler	18	North	Leeb
12 "	"	Busch	16	North	Leeb
15 "	"	Reserve	--	Center	Bock
17 "	"	Kluge	4	Center	Bock
21 "	"	Kuechler	18	North	Leeb
22 "	"	Schobert	11	South	Rundstedt
23 "	"	Kluge	4	Center	Bock
24 "	"	Stuelpnagel	17	South	Rundstedt
26 "	"	Hoth	3Pz	Center	Bock
28 "	"	Strauss	9	Center	Bock
30 "	"	Busch	16	North	Leeb
31 "	"	Guderian	2Pz	Center	Bock
32 "	"	Busch	16	North	Leeb

No. of Div. & type	Theatre of War	Commander	Army	Army Group	Commander
34 Inf.	East	Guderian	2Pz	Center	Bock
35 "	"	Hoth	3Pz	Center	Bock
44 "	"	Kleist	1Pz	South	Rundstedt
45 "	"	Guderian	2Pz	Center	Bock
48 "	S.E./res E. 7/4	List	12	Southeast	List
50 "	East	Schobert	11	South	Rundstedt
52 "	"	Reserve	--	Center	Bock
56 "	"	Reichenau	6	South	Rundstedt
57 "	"	Kleist	1Pz	South	Rundstedt
58 "	"	Kuechler	18	North	Leeb
61 "	"	Kuechler	18	North	Leeb
62 "	"	Reichenau	6	South	Rundstedt
68 "	"	Stuelpnagel	17	South	Rundstedt
69 "	Nor.	Falkenhorst		Norway	Falkenhorst
71 "	East	Stuelpnagel	17	South	Rundstedt
72 "	"	Schobert	11	South	Rundstedt
73 "	S.E./res E. 7/4	List	12	Southeast	List
75 "	East	Kleist	1Pz	South	Rundstedt
76 "	"	Schobert	11	South	Rundstedt
78 "	"	Kluge	4	Center	Bock
79 "	"	Reserve	--	South	Rundstedt
81 "	West	Dollmann	7	West	Witzleben
82 "	"	Dollmann	7	West	Witzleben
83 "	"	Vietinghoff	15	West	Witzleben
86 "	East	Reserve		North	Leeb
87 "	"	Strauss	9	Center	Bock
88 "	West	Dollmann	7	West	Witzleben
93 "	W./res E. 7/4	--	--	West	Witzleben
95 "	W./res E. 6/7	--	--	West	Witzleben
97 "	East	Stuelpnagel	17	South	Rundstedt
99 Lt.inf	"	Reserve		South	Rundstedt
100 Lt.inf	"	Stuelpnagel	17	South	Rundstedt
101 Lt.inf	"	Stuelpnagel	17	South	Rundstedt
102 Lt.inf	"	Strauss	9	Center	Bock

No. of Div. & type	Theatre of War	Commander	Army	Army Group	Commander
106 Inf.	Ger./res E. 6/25	--	--	--	--
110 "	East	Reserve	--	Center	Bock
111 "	"	Kleist	1Pz	South	Rundstedt
112 "	Ger./res E. 6/25	--	--	--	--
113 "	East	Reserve	--	South	Rundstedt
121 "	"	Busch	16	North	Leeb
122 "	"	Busch	16	North	Leeb
123 "	"	Busch	16	North	Leeb
125 "	"	Reserve	--	South	Rundstedt
126 "	"	Busch	16	South	Rundstedt
129 "	"	Strauss	9	Center	Bock
131 "	"	Kluge	4	Center	Bock
132 "	"	Reichenau	6	South	Rundstedt
134 "	"	Kluge	4	Center	Bock
137 "	"	Kluge	4	Center	Bock
161 "	"	Strauss	9	Center	Bock
162 "	"	Strauss	9	Center	Bock
163 "	Nor/Fin	Englebrecht		Finland	Falkenhorst
164 "	S. E.	List	12	Southeast	List
167 "	East	Guderian	2Pz	Center	Bock
169 "	"	Reichenau	6	South	Rundstedt
169 "	"	Englebrecht		Finland	Falkenhorst
170 "	"	Sehobert	11	South	Rundstedt
183 "	S.E./res E. 7/4	List	12	Southeast	List
196 "	Nor.	Falkenhorst		Norway	Falkenhorst
197 "	East	Reserve	--	Center	Bock
198 "	"	Sehobert	11	South	Rundstedt
199 "	Nor.	Falkenhorst		Norway	Falkenhorst
205 "	West	Dollmann	7	West	Witzleben
206 "	East	Reserve	--	North	Leeb
207 "	"	Reserve	--	North	Leeb
208 "	West	Vietinghoff	15	West	Witzleben
211 "	West	Dollmann	7	West	Witzleben
212 "	West	Dollmann	7	West	Witzleben
213 "	East	Reichenau	6	South	Rundstedt
214 "	Nor.	Falkenhorst		Norway	Falkenhorst
215 "	West	Blaskowitz	1	West	Witzleben
216 "	"	Vietinghoff	15	West	Witzleben

No. of Div. & type	Theatre of War	Commander	Army	Army Group	Commander
217 Inf.	East	Kuechler	18	North	Leeb
218 "	Den.	Luedke		Denmark	Luedke
221 "	East	Kluge	4	Center	Bock
223 "	West	Dollmann	7	West	Witzleben
225 "	"	Vietinghoff	15	West	Witzleben
227 "	"	Vietinghoff	15	West	Witzleben
239 "	East	Schobert	11	South	Rundstedt
246 "	West	Dollmann	7	West	Witzleben
251 "	East	Reserve	--	Center	Bock
252 "	"	Kluge	4	Center	Bock
253 "	"	Busch	16	North	Leeb
254 "	"	Kuechler	18	North	Leeb
255 "	"	Guderian	2Ps	Center	Bock
256 "	"	Strauss	9	Center	Bock
257 "	"	Stuelpnagel	17	South	Bock
258 "	"	Kluge	4	Center	Bock
260 "	W./res E. 7/4	--	--	West	Witzleben
262 "	East	Stuelpnagel	17	South	Rundstedt
263 "	"	Kluge	4	Center	Bock
267 "	"	Guderian	2Ps	Center	Bock
268 "	"	Kluge	4	Center	Bock
269 "	"	Hoepfner	4Ps	North	Leeb
281 "	"	Reserve	--	North	Leeb
285 "	"	Reserve	--	North	Leeb
288 "	"	Kluge	4	Center	Bock
290 "	"	Hoepfner	4Ps	North	Leeb
291 "	"	Kuechler	18	North	Leeb
292 "	"	Kluge	4	Center	Bock
293 "	"	Reserve		Center	Bock
294 "	S.E./res E. 7/4	List	12	Southeast	List
295 "	East	Stuelpnagel	17	South	Rundstedt
296 "	"	Stuelpnagel	17	South	Rundstedt
297 "	"	Reichenau	6	South	Rundstedt
298 "	"	Kleist	1Ps	South	Rundstedt
299 "	"	Kleist	1Ps	South	Rundstedt
302 "	West	Vietinghoff	15	West	Witzleben
304 "	"	Vietinghoff	15	West	Witzleben
305 "	"	Dollmann	7	West	Witzleben
306 "	"	Vietinghoff	15	West	Witzleben
319 "	"	Vietinghoff	15	West	Witzleben
320 "	"	Vietinghoff	15	West	Witzleben

No. of Div. & type	Theatre of War	Commander	Army	Army Group	Commander
321 Inf.	West	Vietinghoff	15	West	Witzleben
323 "	"	Vietinghoff	15	West	Witzleben
327 "	"	Blaskowitz	1	West	Witzleben
332 "	"	Vietinghoff	15	West	Witzleben
333 "	"	Dollmann	7	West	Witzleben
335 "	"	Blaskowitz	1	West	Witzleben
336 "	"	Vietinghoff	15	West	Witzleben
337 "	"	Blaskowitz	1	West	Witzleben
339 "	"	Blaskowitz	1	West	Witzleben
340 "	"	Vietinghoff	15	West	Witzleben
342 "	"	Blaskowitz	1	West	Witzleben
403 "	East	Strauss	9	Center	Book
444 "	"	Stuelpnagel	17	South	Rundstedt
454 "	"	Stuelpnagel	17	South	Rundstedt
702 "	Nor.	Falkenhorst		Norway	Falkenhorst
704 ^a "	S. E.	List	12	Southeast	List
707 ^b "	East	Reserve	--	--	--
708 "	West	Dollmann	7	West	Witzleben
709 "	West	Dollmann	7	West	Witzleben
710 "	Nor.	Falkenhorst		Norway	Falkenhorst
711 "	West	Vietinghoff	15	West	Witzleben
712 ^b "	West	Dollmann	7	West	Witzleben
713 ^b "	East	Reserve	--	--	--
714 "	S. E.	List	12	Southeast	List
715 "	West	Dollmann	7	West	Witzleben
716 "	"	Vietinghoff	15	West	Witzleben
717 "	S. E.	List	12	Southeast	List
718 "	S. E.	List	12	Southeast	List
719 "	West	Reserve	--	West	Witzleben

^aThe 94th, 96th, and 98th Infantry divisions are not included in the table. These divisions were disbanded and many of the units sent to the 93d Infantry division. Other units became field replacement battalions for Barbarossa. This may account for the difference of opinion held by many authors. Some say the Germans had 205 divisions at this time; others say they had 208 divisions.

^bThese divisions were not used in Barbarossa. Later they were traded for more useful divisions. For instance the 713 Infantry division was sent to Crete in late July. The 6th Mountain was then sent to Russia.

B. Mountain Divisions

No. of Div.	Theatre of War	Commander	Army	Army Group	Commander
1 Mt.	East	Stuelpnagel	17	South	Rundstedt
2 "	Fin.	Dietl	--	Finland	Falkenhorst
3 "	Fin.	Dietl	--	Finland	Falkenhorst
4 "	East	Reserve	--	South	Rundstedt
5 "	S. E.	List	12	Southeast	List
6 "	S. E.	List	12	Southeast	List

C. Cavalry Divisions and Motorised Infantry Divisions

No. of Div.	Theatre of War	Commander	Army	Army Group	Commander
1 Cav.	East	Guderian	2Pz	Center	Bock
3 Mot.	"	Hoepfner	4Pz	North	Leeb
10 Mot.	"	Guderian	2Pz	Center	Bock
14 Mot.	"	Hoth	3Pz	Center	Bock
16 Mot.	"	Kleist	1Pz	South	Rundstedt
18 Mot.	"	Hoth	3Pz	Center	Bock
20 Mot.	"	Hoth	3Pz	Center	Bock
25 Mot.	"	Kleist	1Pz	South	Rundstedt
29 Mot.	"	Guderian	2Pz	Center	Bock
36 Mot.	"	Hoepfner	4Pz	North	Leeb
60 Mot.	"	Reserve	--	--	--

D. Panzer Divisions

No. of Div.	Theatre of War	Commander	Army	Army Group	Commander
1 Pz	East	Hoepfner	4Pz	North	Leeb
2 Pz	Ger/res E. 7/4	--	--	--	--
3 Pz	East	Guderian	2Pz	Center	Bock
4 Pz	"	Guderian	2Pz	Center	Bock
5 Pz	Ger/res E. 7/4	--	--	--	--
6 Pz	East	Hoepfner	4Pz	North	Leeb
7 Pz	"	Hoth	3Pz	Center	Bock
8 Pz	"	Hoepfner	4Pz	North	Leeb
9 Pz	"	Kleist	1Pz	South	Rundstedt
10 Pz	"	Guderian	2Pz	Center	Bock
11 Pz	"	Kleist	1Pz	South	Rundstedt
12 Pz	"	Hoth	3Pz	Center	Bock
13 Pz	"	Kleist	1Pz	South	Rundstedt
14 Pz	"	Kleist	1Pz	South	Rundstedt
15 Pz	Afr.	Rommel	A.C.	Africa	Rommel
16 Pz	East	Kleist	1Pz	South	Rundstedt
17 Pz	"	Guderian	2Pz	Center	Bock
18 Pz	"	Guderian	2Pz	Center	Bock
19 Pz	"	Hoth	3Pz	Center	Bock
20 Pz	"	Hoth	3Pz	Center	Bock
21 Pz	See F.				

E. Waffen SS Divisions and Other Units

Name of Div. or Unit	Theatre of War	Commander	Army	Army Group	Commander
Das Reich	East	Guderian	2Pz	Center	Bock
Totenkopf	"	Hoepfner	4Pz	Center	Bock
Viking	"	Kleist	1Pz	South	Rundstedt
A. Hitler	"	Kleist	1Pz	South	Rundstedt
SS Pol.Div.	"	Reserve	--	North	Leeb
Brig. North	Fin.	Dietl	--	Finland	Falkenhorst

F. Independent Regiments, Brigades and Units of
the Army

Name of Unit	Theatre of War	Commander	Army	Army Group	Commander
Gross Duetch. (Mot. Inf. R.)	East	Guderian	2pz	Center	Bock
900 Brig.	East	Reserve	--	Center	Bock
125 Inf. Reg.	S. E.	List	12	Southeast	List
5 Lt. Div., In July, 1941,	Afr.	Rommel	A.C.	Africa	Rommel
21 Pz. Div.					

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Bormann, Martin. The Bormann Letters: The Private Correspondence between Martin Bormann and his Wife from January, 1943 to April, 1945. Edited by H. R. Trevor-Roper. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolsen, 1954.

Martin Bormann is the so-called "evil genius" behind Hitler. The letters, however, reveal him as simple, uncomplicated and often naive. He remained faithful to his Fuehrer to the very end. Besides proving that this man was somewhat human, the correspondence contains no sensational revelations and is useful only in giving the reader an idea of day to day life in wartime Germany.

Gilbert, Felix (ed.). Hitler Directs His War. New York: Oxford University Press, 1950.

A primary source covering the Fuehrer's conferences on the over-all military situation from 1 December, 1942, through 23 March, 1945. More attention is focused on Hitler's approach to the problems and his general political philosophy than to general military conduct. The book is very useful in gaining an insight into the mentality of the German war leaders. However the book only covers conferences deemed important by the author. Also many of the records of these conferences were totally or partially destroyed.

Hitler, Adolf. Hitler's Secret Conversations, 1941-1944. Translated and edited by Norman Cameron and R. H. Stevens New York: Farrar, Straus, and Young, 1953.

A stenographic record of Hitler's nightly "table talks." The book is of extreme value in gaining an insight and understanding of the Fuehrer. The book proved that Hitler was very adept at gauging his conversation to his audience, regardless of his sincerity.

Hubatsch, Walter, (ed.). Hitler's Weisungen fur die Kriegfuhrung 1939-1945, Dokumente des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht. Frankfurt-am-Main: Bernard & Graefe Verlag fur Wehrwesen, 1962.

A collection of Hitler's directives for the war.

Reinhardt, Helmuth. Utilization of Captured Material by Germany in World War II. Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1953.

Discusses the extensive German use of captured war material.

Trevor-Roper, H. R. (ed. and trans.). Blitzkrieg to Defeat, Hitler's War Directives, 1939-1945. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964.

An annotated translation of the majority of Hubatsch's Hitler's Weisungen fur die Kriegfuhrung, 1939-1945.

U.S., Adjutant General's Department. Trials of War Criminals before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law Number 10, October, 1946-April, 1949. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1951-1952. I-XV.

The publication contains very valuable documents presented in evidence. Volumes ten and eleven, often referred to as the "High Command Case," are devoted to the trials of the ranking German command and staff officers.

U.S., Department of Army. German Antiguerrilla Operations in the Balkans (1941-1944). Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1954.

A study of German and Italian methods in combating the guerrillas in the Balkans and their successes and failures. However, it deals with general operations and lacks detail as far as the specific operations of the guerrillas are concerned.

U.S., Department of the Army. The German Campaign in Russia-- Planning and Operations (1940-1942). Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1955.

The book gives excellent insight into the problems faced by the military prior to and during the German invasion of Russia. However, it lacks thorough documentation and was written primarily for the use by the military.

U.S., Department of the Army. The German Campaign in the Balkans (Spring 1941) and the Seizure of Crete. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1953.

This is an excellent source for troop movements, military problems, and military strategy during the Balkan invasions. The documentation is poor.

U.S., Department of the Army. German Casualties, Crete-1941. Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1954.

This study tries to answer the controversial question of the number of German casualties suffered in the Battle of Crete, but it fails to offer conclusive evidence.

U.S., Department of the Army. German Preparations for the Attack against Russia. Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1954.

A short pamphlet on the transfer of forces to the Russian frontier and the planned methods of attack on Soviet Union. It is written chiefly for military consumption.

U.S., Department of Commerce, Weather Bureau. World Weather Records, 1941-1950. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1959.

U.S., Foreign Economic Administration, German Penetration of Corporate Holding in Serbia. Civil Affairs Information Guide. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1944.

U.S., Department of State. Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941. Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Office. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1948.

A collection of most of the important documents of the German Foreign Office dealing with Russian relations between 1939 and 1941.

U.S., War Department. Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1946-1948. 10 vols.

This publication contains the testimony of defendants and witnesses, as well as arguments of the

prosecution and defense at the Nuremberg trials. Although some of the oral evidence must be viewed with caution, the numerous documents presented in their entirety are of extreme value. Supplements A and B contain written statements by the defendants and final arguments by the defense council.

U.S., War Department. Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression: Opinion and Judgement. Washington: Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1947.

Contains the final opinions, judgment, and sentences of the International Tribunal at Nuremberg.

Memoirs and Diaries

Baumbach, Werner. The Life and Death of the Luftwaffe. New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1949.

Werner Baumbach was Hitler's general of the bombers. The book argues that Hitler was trapped by his decision for a quick war and, thus, Germany could never adjust to delays in the timetable and changing needs. The appendix contains tables on the strength of the Luftwaffe during the war years.

_____. Zu Spät. Munich: Pflaum, 1949.

Buttlar, Freiherr von. Ehrenbuch des Deutschen Wehrmacht. Stuttgart: Dr. Hans Reigler, 1954.

An account of the German infantry by one of their generals during the Second World War. It draws a vivid contrast to the often-glorified panzer divisions. The introduction is by Field Marshal von Rundstedt.

Ciano, Galeazzo. The Ciano Diaries 1939-1943: The Complete Unabridged Diaries of Count Galeazzo Ciano, Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1938-1943. Edited and trans. by Hugh Gibson. New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1946.

This is a day by day account by the Italian foreign minister who was considered by many as being the Duce's right hand. It is very valuable in evaluating the

Italian state of mind during their partnership with the Third Reich. But the work is somewhat colored by the author's personal pride.

Dirksen, Herbert von. Moscow, Tokyo, London, Twenty Years of German Foreign Policy. Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952.

Dirksen was the German ambassador to Moscow from 1928 to 1933, Tokyo from 1933 to 1938, and ambassador to London from 1938 to 1939. According to the author, Hitler rendered his position ineffective. The work contains no documents and its worth is destroyed by the self-glorification of the author.

Doenitz, Karl. Memoirs, Ten Years and Twenty Days. Translated by R.H. Stevens. London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1959.

The book, by Hitler's U-boat Commander and head of the Third Reich after Hitler's death, deals chiefly with submarine warfare, and especially the effectiveness of the "wolf pack." He also takes pot shots at the Nazi high brass for their ineffective strategy. According to Doenitz, if his ideas had been followed, Germany would have won the battle of the Atlantic and therefore possibly the war.

Goebbels, Joseph. The Goebbels Diaries. Edited and translated by Louis P. Lochner. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1948.

Guderian, Heinz. Panzer Leader. Translated by Constantine Fitzgibbon. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1952.

The author of this book is one of the more brilliant German military leaders who thought of the panzer divisions as being an independent arm of the Wehrmacht. Unorthodox thinking often left him at odds with Hitler and other generals. The book gives the reader an excellent insight into the strategy of the panzer armies. Guderian blames Hitler for Germany's defeat in Russia because he didn't allow the panzer leader to drive on Moscow when he had the opportunity. According to Guderian, Von Kluge, his immediate superior, is only a little less to blame.

Hassel, Ulrich von. The Von Hassell Diaries, 1938-1944. Translated by Hugh Gibson, Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1947.

This is the diary of a conspirator in various plots against Hitler. As a cover, he was a member of the Central European Economic Conference. As one who opposed Hitler, he offers many revealing experiences behind the scenes of Hitler's wartime Reich. He is astute at giving the real reasons behind some of the more unfathomable moves of the Reich.

Hitler, ~~Adolph~~. Mein Kampf. Translated by Ralph Manheim. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1943.

Mein Kampf is Hitler's satanic Bible filled with hatred and blood. That such a man could go so far in realizing his ambitions with the help of millions of willing tools is almost beyond human comprehension. The book is poorly written and lacks completely in documentation. Its only usefulness is in gaining an insight into the mind of a man who at one time controlled almost all of Europe.

Kesselring, Albrecht. Kesselring, A Soldier's Record. Translated by Lynton Hudson. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1954.

The autobiography of one of Hitler's Luftwaffe commanders and later commander of the Italian front. It is a seemingly sincere book by a man who placed the task of fighting the battle higher than his own moral convictions. The book gives insights into problems faced by the military during the various campaigns. Kesselring's reflections, not always backed by evidence, tend to detract from the book's over-all value.

Manstein, Erich von. Lost Victories. Edited and translated by Anthony G. Powell. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1958.

One of Hitler's brilliant young tank leaders has produced one of the better memoirs by the German generals. It relates some of the German mistakes in the war that might have been converted into victories. Manstein uses sound judgment and tries to be objective.

Papen, Franz von. Memoirs. Translated by Brian Connell. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1953.

These Memoirs appear to have good balance and are of value. They are written by the German Nationalist Leader who helped engineer Hitler's assumption of power and was later appointed ambassador to Vienna and Ankara. He was very effective in keeping Turkey neutral while at Ankara.

Raeder, Erich von. My Life. Translated by Henry W. Drexel. Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1960.

The autobiography of Hitler's Grand Admiral advises against attacking England and against attempting to invade England after the fall of France. He was also opposed to the invasion of Russia. The book is very revealing in his character. Raeder's book sets forth some very strong concepts on the importance of sea power.

Schacht, Hjalmar Horace Greeley. Confessions of "The Old Wizard": The Autobiography of Hjalmar Horace Greeley Schacht. Translated by Diana Pyke. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1956.

Hitler's Minister of Economics from 1934 to 1937 is the author of this book. He is given much of the credit for Germany's economic recovery during this period, and was instrumental in bringing the Danubian countries into a closer economic relationship with the Reich.

Warlimont, Walter. Inside Hitler's Headquarters, 1939-1945. Translated by R. H. Barry. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964.

The author was Deputy Chief of the Armed Forces Staff under General Jodl. The work is an excellent study of the relationships between Hitler, the subordinate commands, and the relationship of O.K.W. to O.K.H.

Weizsäcker, Ernst von. Memoirs of Ernst von Weizsäcker. Translated by John Andrews. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951.

A leading member of Hitler's diplomatic corps, often at odds with Hitler, writes about the Reich's over-all diplomatic strategy (or lack of it). The memoirs are quite valuable in gaining insights into various segments of Hitler's Third Reich, but in certain instances Weizsäcker glorifies his own "crystal ball gazing."

Unpublished Material

Halder, Generaloberst Franz. "The Private War Journal of Generaloberst Franz Halder (Chief of the General Staff of the Supreme Command of the German Army, 1939-1942)." Released by the Office of the Chief Historian, Headquarters European Command; United States Army, 1950. Vols. I-VIII. (Mimeographed.)

This journal is the chief primary source for the thesis. Halder records the military events as they happen in a day by day account. The work also contains personal opinions on grand strategy and the over-all conduct of the war as added features.

General Works

Anders, Wladyslaw. Hitler's Defeat in Russia. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953.

Hitler's strategy, or lack of it, Anders contends, led to the defeat of the Germans in the Steppes of Russia. The book also discusses training, tactical leadership qualities, misuse of air fleets, and supply difficulties. This is a good book for an insight into the German campaign in Russia.

Bartz, Karl. Swastika in the Air. London: William Kimber, 1956.

A highly revealing book on the German Air Force and its problems, many of which were caused by poor leadership. The book covers a wide range of useful material but it lacks documentation.

Black, C. E., and Helmreich, E. C. Twentieth Century Europe. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952.

This is a good general history for background material.

Blumentritt, Guenther. Von Rundstedt, The Soldier and the Man. Translated by Cuthbert Reavely. London: Odhams Press Limited, 1952.

An appraisal of von Rundstedt by his Chief of Staff which gives insights into the human side of the general as well as an account of the part played by him

in the campaigns of the Second World War. The over-all value of the book is partially destroyed by the "hero worship" the author displays throughout the book.

Brandt, Karl. Management of Agriculture and Food in the German-Occupied and Other Areas of Fortress Europe. In collaboration with: Otto Schiller and Franz Angrimm. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1953.

This publication goes into the management of agriculture and food in Hitler's dominated Europe in meticulous detail. It is not well written and is difficult to read, but serves its intended purpose.

Pullock, Allen. Hitler, A Study in Tyranny. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952.

This excellent book on Adolph Hitler was written earlier and is not as complete as Shirer's but it is a must for all historians of the period.

Churchill, Winston S. The Grand Alliance. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1950.

This is part of a series by the British prime minister on the Second World War. The book gives insights into British over-all strategy from January, 1941 through December, 1941, when Britain's back was, so to speak, against the wall. The book is well written and contains an extensive appendix covering the prime ministers personal minutes, telegrams, and personal Directives during the period.

Clark, Alan. Barbarossa, The Russian-German Conflict 1941-1945. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1965.

As a general reference on this phase of World War II this book is unsurpassed.

Craig, Gordon A. The Politics of the Prussian Army 1640-1945. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955.

Dietrich, Otto. Hitler. Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1955.

Dietrich, the Reich's press chief, argues that Hitlerism was not merely the creation of a certain political situation, but was the reflection of a moral and spiritual emptiness. He tends to conclude that Hitler deliberately trampled on the feelings of humanity and this was the chief reason for his downfall. The book is useful for an insight into Hitler but it is not a good reference work.

Encyclopedia Americana. New York: Americana Corporation, 1957. Vol. XXIX.

Encyclopedia Britannica. 9th ed., Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.

Encyclopaedia Britannica Book of the Year, 1942. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1942.

Fuller, J. F. C. A Military History of the Western World. New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1958. Vol. III.

Fuller covers the period from the Seven Days Battle, 1862, to the battle of Leyte Gulf, 1944, in volume three. It is an excellent book on military maneuvers, gains and losses, and also covers the diplomatic side-lights briefly.

Garthoff, Raymond L. Soviet Military Doctrine. Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1953.

The book is clear and concise, but some of the facts used are questionable as to accuracy.

Goerlitz, Walter. History of the German General Staff. New York: Fredric A. Praeger, Inc., 1953.

A history tracing the German General Staff and more specifically German Generalship back to the time of the armies of the Great Elector. Nearly one half of the book deals with the Second World War and its prelude. The book is very well written and is a must for all "western" military historians. Although footnotes are lacking, Goerlitz's work abounds in underlying facts.

Hart, B. H. Liddell. The German Generals Talk. New York: William Morrow & Co., 1948.

A study of the German generals including their accounts and opinions of strategic mistakes and tactical errors which proves generals had little influence over the "war lord" even though they had the unfortunate effect of postponing his downfall. In most cases the individual seems to be rather objective in his answers, which contributed greatly to the book's over-all value.

Heckstall-Smith, and Bailie-Grehman. Greek Tragedy 1941. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1961.

The book concerns itself chiefly with economic matters and claims that Greece was a victim of world circumstances and had to pay the price.

Hilger, Gustav, and Meyer, Alfred. The Incompatible Allies, German-Soviet Relations 1918-1941. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1953.

Hilger was the second counselor of the German embassy in Moscow and was very close to the negotiations between the two powers. He describes the increasing tension between the two countries after the rise of Hitler as well as the changing situations and errors of judgment on both sides. The book is very interesting and is a good authoritative account of the period in question.

Jackson, W. G. E. Seven Roads to Moscow. New York: Philosophical Library, 1958.

The book tries to draw parallels between seven different attempted conquests of Moscow. While the author makes the reader think, he seems often to bend his facts to fit his argument.

Kendrew, W. G. Climate of the Continents. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955.

Lee, Asher. The German Air Force. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946.

Lee gives an appraisal of the Luftwaffe during the Second World War. The fact that it was published soon after the war ended detracts much from the book. Over-all detail is also lacking. However, it gives insights into the general problems faced by the Luftwaffe, such as shortages and strategic movements of planes and personnel.

Lewis, Cleons. Nazi Europe and World Trade. Assisted by John C. McClelland. Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1941.

The book was written at the wrong time to be of real value, therefore it was used only sparingly.

Lukacs, John A. The Great Powers & Eastern Europe. New York: American Book Co., 1953.

The book is a meticulously detailed account of Eastern Europe between the Wars and shortly thereafter. It contains much useful material but the work appears to be biased especially in favor of Hungary and Bulgaria.

Mueller-Hillebrand. Das Heer 1933-1945. Darmstadt:
E. S. Mittler & Sohn., 1954. 2 vol.

The growth of the German army under Hitler up through June 28, 1941, is the main content of the book. Charts make up a good share of the book. The charts include the drafting of divisions, the strength of each type of division, and the deployment of the divisions for each of the campaigns.

Rauch, Georg von. A History of Soviet Russia. New York:
Frederick A. Praeger, 1957.

Rauch presents a good chronological outline of Russia's history since 1917. The author takes the position that Russia's history is by no means pre-determined. The book is written with good objectivity. Diplomacy of the Soviet Union between 1917 and 1952 is covered, but general.

Reitlinger, Gerald. The House Built on Sand: The Conflicts of German Policy in Russia, 1939-1945. Viking Press, 1960.

This work claims the often brutal occupation of western Russia by the Germans was not really the cause of the partisan warfare behind the lines. It was the result of the "scale of the battlefield," and the "Russian state of mind" which knew that it was only a matter of time before they became a part of Russia again. Reitlinger gives good evidence to support his contention.

Rossi, A. The Russo-German Alliance, 1939-1941. London:
Chapman & Hall, 1950.

The author contends Russia was doing everything in her power to avoid war with Germany from 1939 to 1941, and only the German invasion forced her to join the western democracies. The facts are often twisted to fit the authors point of view.

Shirer, William L. The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960.

This book covers all phases of the Hitlerian period including the fateful decisions secretly made, the intrigues, the treachery, the motives which led up to them, the principal actors behind the scenes and the extent of the terror they exercised and their techniques of organizing it, as well as the bare, exciting and revolting events familiar to most contemporary historians. In addition, the book has excellent documentation.

Stavrianos, L. S. The Balkans Since 1453. New York: Rinehart & Co., Inc., 1958.

This is a good general history of the Balkans, however at times it is possibly too general.

Taylor, Telford. The March of Conquest. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958.

Hitler's instability, the generals' lack of vision and crucial flaws in the basic structure of the Third Reich stalled the German military machine at the peak of its power and prestige, so says the author. He then does an excellent job of proving it. However, one has the feeling at times that his arguments are too pat. The book is well documented and very easy to read. It contains German military ranks and rank lists in the appendix.

Sword and Swastika. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952.

The book covers the alliance of the German military leaders with those of the Nazi totalitarianism. This, so the author contends, sealed the fate of Germany and cast the die for war. The book ends with the conquest of Poland--when collaboration for the conflict was first established between the archaic professional warriors and the atavistic demagogues, adventurers, misfits, and thugs. Taylor offers good insights into the officer corps and the early growth years of the Third Reich.

Tippelskirch, Kurt von. Geschichte Des Zweiten Weltkriegs. Bonn: Athenaum Verlag, 1956.

This is a good general history of World War II from the German point of view. The author tries to be as objective as possible and in most cases succeeds, but as in the case of other German generals, he tends to blame the Fuehrer for Germany's defeat in the war.

Werth, Alexander. Russia at War 1941-1945. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1964.

An excellent general reference containing parts of many useful documents pertaining to diplomacy and the preparations for battle during the period. While the book is made more interesting by close-ups of the personalities involved, this might be slightly overdone.

Wheeler-Bennett, John W. The Nemesis of Power, The German Army in Politics 1918-1945. New York: St. Martins, 1953.

Wheeler-Bennett offers an explanation of how the German Army survived the defeat of 1918, and how it then proceeded to dominate the political life of the German Republic. He also attempts to explain the responsibility of the army for bringing the Nazis to power and, after tolerating the infamies of the regime, becoming the nemesis of this action. He ends with a warning for the future. His arguments are powerful. The book is well written and well documented.

Wilmot, Chester. The Struggle for Europe. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952.

Along with covering the war, the book attempts to point out how military victory was turned into political defeat for the western Allies. Wilmot claims Yalta was Stalin's greatest victory. The book does not go beyond the war, but it gives food for thought.