

What the Germans did to Greece

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MARIA PADISKA STILL WEEPS, FOUR MONTHS AFTER THE GERMANS KILLED HER MOTHER IN MASSACRE AT THE GREEK TOWN OF DISTOMO

WHAT THE GERMANS DID TO GREECE

As British troops completed the occupation of Greece the cold, unassailable evidence of German cruelty and Greek suffering began to reach the world. It was evidence in terms of living and dead people and people who were somewhere in between. It was too much to tell in words, so the most precise testimony was in pictures. The pictures on these pages, taken by LIFE War Photographer Dmitri Kessel, show in detail what the Germans did to Greece.

The most damaging German crime in Greece was murder. The New Order had no place for the Greeks, and at first the Germans seemed bent on their extermination. In the winter of 1941-42 they let 430,000 Greeks starve to death. Later, when it became apparent that the New Order was a less pressing job than

the war, the Germans seemed to abandon their starvation plan. But the wanton, unplanned killing of Greeks went on as before.

Other human damage in Greece will never be measured accurately. Nearly all Greeks are suffering from some form of malnutrition. Hardship has made many Greek women barren. In some places the tuberculosis rate among Greek children is as high as 80%. Material damage has also been heavy. More than 2,000 Greek villages have been destroyed. The machines have been looted from the textile and chemical industries of Athens, Salonika and Eleusis. Added to all this, the Greek currency was hopelessly inflated.

The Greeks fought back with courage and brains. Their most effective fighting organization was the

ELAS, military arm of EAM, majority Greek political front. During the occupation ELAS had about 50,000 armed men. The EDES, a much smaller, right-wing group, also fought the Germans. Between them the ELAS and EDES kept six German divisions busy.

One thing the Greeks may have won in the last three years is democracy. When the war began they were governed by the dictatorship of Premier John Metaxas, who had abolished the Greek party system and parliament in 1936. The present middle-of-the-road Greek government, headed by Premier George Papandreu, has promised that a plebiscite will soon be held on the question of King George II's return. After that the government promises a general election, the first the Greeks will have had in 10 years.



Five relatives of Katina Pitson were killed in Distomo. Many of the town's big families were entirely wiped out.



Six relatives of Maria Karouzou, her father, mother, brother, sister, son-in-law, 3-year-old nephew were killed by Germans.



Her baby was in Zoi Sechremeli's arms when Germans shot it in the head. The scar is where the bullet went through the shoulder.

TOWN'S DEATH

GERMANS MASSACRED THE PEOPLE,
BURNED THE HOUSES OF DISTOMO

One of the last official German acts in Greece was the murder of Distomo, a town about 60 miles northwest of Athens. Last June a passing German detachment asked Distomo's priest, Father Sotirios Zissis, if there were any partisans in the area. The priest said he knew of none. The Germans, however, were attacked in the town. At first they came back and killed Father Zissis. A few days later a group of spruce, black-uniformed SS men rode into Distomo, ordered

the townspeople into their houses, went from house to house shooting everyone they could find. In two hours they killed 1,000 of Distomo's 1,200 people. The few survivors happened to be away in the hills and fields.

After the Germans had finished with the slaughtering they looted and burned the little town. Fifteen days later they came back again, but this time the villagers were warned and fled to the hills. The Germans could only loot again what they had already looted once.



Distomo is town of white stone houses in hills near Mount Parnassus, sacred to Apollo and the Muses. Empty window-frames show how houses were burned by the Germans.



In Distomo graveyard most of massacre dead are buried. Many others were carried out of the houses and placed in back-yard graves by the few survivors who were out of town when the Germans came.



Ragged Greek children are from Mákri, village burned and looted by Germans which is about 50 miles from Distomo. Children were among the bravest of Greek resistance forces. In Athens they

robbed German trucks in broad daylight, painted BBC news on walls at night. Sometimes, by the use of ingenious sentry systems, shouted the news aloud through megaphones in the city.

Greece (continued)



Along a road south of Athens a German antitank gun was wrecked in fighting between Germans and the British. Germans had begun withdrawal even before British landed.



Greek miller Petros Latinopoulos lost 11 members of his family when the Germans burned his mill and home. Germans later shot his brother, demented by the massacre, as he stood beside the road.

ROAD'S RELICS

THEY MARK PASSING OF THE GERMANS

On the main road running north from Athens the Germans left a narrow wake of complete horror. They did many things to the towns and people along the road, but the total of them was one thing: they destroyed everything they saw that was Greek.

The clearest records left by the Germans on this road are the neat graves and ruined towns. At the vil-

lage of Agoriani only the houses and one bedridden old woman were burned. But in one house outside Agoriani the Germans killed 26 men, women and children. At Charakolithos one frightened old man watched the Germans shoot 123 Greeks, 10 at a time. Other Greeks later came and buried them by the road.

At Markrikomi the Germans came seven times in

Row of 48 graves marks where the Germans shot 40 Greeks for no apparent reason. Fiftieth man escaped with wounds by letting the Germans pile the dead on top of him.



Armed man on donkey is one of ELAS partisan soldiers. The Germans would slaughter people when they had the slightest suspicion that they were giving aid to the partisans who organized ambushes.





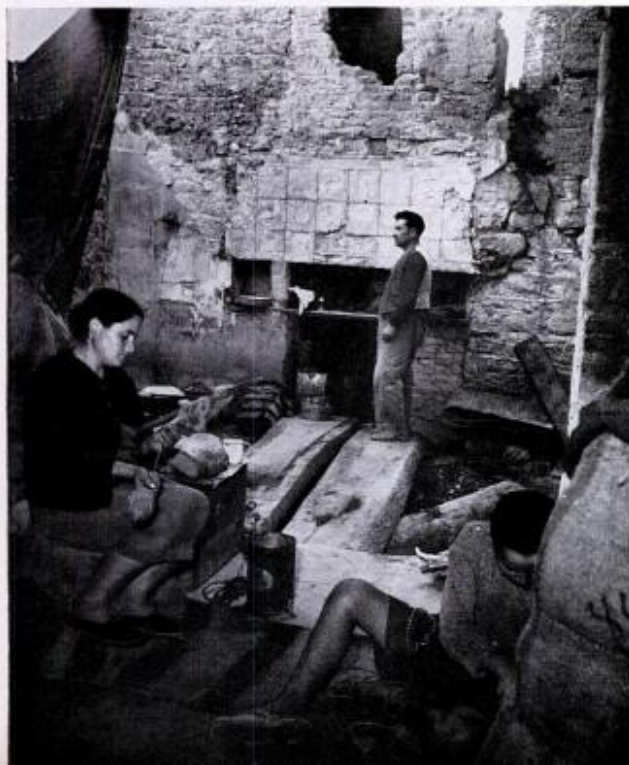
Naked German is one of 160 killed to a man by partisans. The Germans were bathing along the road when partisans attacked. The Germans didn't have a chance to dress and they were shot as they ran.

1943 and 1944 and burned the town every time. Loss of life was not heavy because the villagers fled to the hills when they heard the Germans were coming. Once when they came back after the Germans had left they found 25 wire-bound bodies which had been cremated in a back yard. Nobody knows who these people were, where they came from or why they were killed.

The record was also in people the Germans had left alive. Along the road LIFE Photographer Kessel met a gray-faced man named Matthews Dimakos. Speaking with difficulty, he said: "Mister, I am an American citizen. I came here in 1934 to visit my mother. Then I got married. I wanted to go back to the United States and take my mother and my wife with me. Now I have

no one to take back with me. The Germans came like mad dogs. My wife begged them: 'Please don't take everything.' The Germans shot her. Our baby cried, so the Germans shot it in the head. The baby was 8 months old." An old woman standing at the gate of the Dimakos house began to cry. "She cries because she saw what they did to my wife and baby," Dimakos said.

In roofless house the Greek family Zaphiris sets up housekeeping. Along the road all that remained to the Greeks was the hard, walls of their stone houses and what they could carry on their backs.



Shepherd plays pipe while sheep graze in background. During German occupation shepherds stayed away from the road. Now their sheep graze peacefully by the roadside.

Refugees who took refuge in the hills work slowly back to their village on road. Many Greeks farther from home wait silently along the road for someone to give them a ride.





Political slogans covered walls in Athens as soon as Germans left. One sign suggested that if Germans objected to this they might send Germany's former house painter to point them out.

Greece (continued)

ECONOMY'S RUIN

INFLATION AND POLITICS CREATE NEW TROUBLES

One of the most ingenious German jobs in Greece was the total destruction of ordered economy. They forced the quisling government to issue tons of paper money, and in the inflation which followed (see below) the Greek drachma dropped to a point where one dollar could buy about 5 trillion of them. Last week the government solved this problem by starting all over again with a new drachma worth 25¢.

On the opposite page is another government problem. He is "Ares" Veloulisotis, a chieftain of Ellasas (EAM's military organization), who, like many Greek partisans, wears a thick black beard. Early this month Premier Papandreu announced the end of the days of Ares by ordering that resistance groups be disbanded by Dec. 10. EAM has protested on the ground that some collaborationists will remain armed.

EAM, which is now the biggest political party in Greece, is a left-wing coalition including moderates and Communists. It has five members in the 28-man Papandreu cabinet. Whatever political groups may win out inside Greece, the country's international place has apparently been settled for her. Because of Britain's stake in the Mediterranean, Greece becomes a British, not a Russian, sphere of influence.



Inflation prices were at worst in clothing. Outfit shown above on dummy was priced at 186 trillion drachmas.



Black bread, carefully weighed out by a vender, costs 45 billion drachmas a pound. Rare white bread was higher.



One cigaret, not a pack, cost 5 billions. Boy vender is shown counting out a sheaf of 10-billion drachma bills.



German goods are sold in a sidewalk drugstore. Cake of German Palmolive soap cost 300 billion drachmas.



Shoeshine, for Greeks who have money and shoes, cost 50 billion drachmas. Well-cut suit on customer is rarity.



Money-changers on Sophocles Street count bills with deft fingers. Exchange is usually jammed by speculators.



"ARES," THE GUERRILLA CHIEF, TOOK HIS NAME
AND BEARD FROM THE ANCIENT GREEK GOD OF WAR