What the Germans did to Greece

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A 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, as the most precious testimony was in pictures. The pictures on these pages taken by LIFE War Photographer Diriti Kees, 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 went on their extermination. In the winter of 1941-42 they let 400,000 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 90%. 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 Eritrea. 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 Papandreou, 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.
TOWN'S DEATH
GERMANS MASSACRED THE PEOPLE,
BURNT THE HOUSES OF DISTOMO

One of the last official German acts in Greece was the
murder of Distomo, a town about 60 miles north-
west of Athens. Late June 1941 a passing German detach-
ment asked Distomo's priest, Father Sotirios Zisis, if there were any partisans in the area. The priest said
he knew of none. The Germans, however, were at-
tacked in the town. At first they came back and killed
Father Zisis. A few days later a group of swastika-
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 slaughter-
ing they lootd and burned the little town. Fifteen
days later they came back again, but this time the vil-
lagers were warned and fled to the hills. The Germans
couldn't find again what they had already looted once.
Ragged Greek children are from Milia, village burned and looted by Germans which is about 30 miles from Patras. Children were among the hardest of Greek resistance forces. In Athens they robbed German trucks in broad daylight, painted BBC overseas walls at night. Sometimes, by the use of ingenious witty systems, shouted the news aloud through megaphones in the city.

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ROAD’S RELICS
THEY MARK PASSING OF THE GERMANS

Along a road north of Athens a German antiaircraft gun was wrecked in fighting between Germans and the British. Germans had been withdrawal even before British landed.

Row of 49 graves marks where the Germans shot 49 Greeks for no apparent reason. Fiftieth man escaped with wounds by letting the Germans pile the dead on top of him.

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

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 seat graves and ruined towns. At the village of Asopion only the hams and one beskidden old woman were burned. But in one house outside Agorianti the Germans killed 80 men, women and children.

At Charadollitha one frightened old man watched the Germans shoot 120 Greeks, 10 at a time. Other Greeks later came and buried them by the road.

At Markrikomi the Germans came seven times in
1940 and 1941 and burned the town every time. Less 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 23 wire-bound bodies which had been cremated in a back yard. Nobody knows who those 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 Kossel met a gray-faced man named Matthew Dimakos. Speaking with difficulty, he said: "I am an American citizen. I came here in 1930 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 a ruins house the Greek family Zaphidis set up housekeeping. Along the road all that remained to the Greeks was the land, walls of their stone houses and what they could carry on their backs.

Refugees who took refuge in the hills went slowly back to their village on road. Many Greeks farther from home wait silently along the road for someone to give them a ride.
ECONOMY'S RUIN
INFLATION AND POLITICS CREATE NEW TROUBLES

One of the most ingenuous German jobs in Greece was the total destruction of orderly economy. They forced the civilian 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 30 billion of them. Last week the government solved this problem by starting all over again with a new drachma worth 50¢.

On the opposite page is another government problem. He is "Arcos" Velouchiotis, a chieftain of Elia (EAM's military organization), who, like many Greek partisans, wears a thick black beard. Early this month Premier Papandreou announced the end of the days of Arcos by ordering that resistance groups be disarmed by Dec. 16. EAM has protested on the ground that some collaborators 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 Papandreou 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.

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 home painter to paint them out.

Inflation prices were set in clothing. Outfit shown above on dummy was priced at 500 billion drachmas.

Black bread, carefully weighed out by a vendor, costs 45 billion drachmas a pound. Home white bread is higher.

A cigarette, not a pack, costs 5 billion. Boy vendor is shown counting out a sheaf of 16-billion drachma bills.

German goods are sold in a sidewalk drugstore. Cake at German Fudicino shop costs 300 billion drachmas.

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

Money-changers on Sophocles Street count bills with sift fingers. Exchange is usually jammed by speculators.
"ARES," THE GUERRILLA CHIEF, TOOK HIS NAME AND BEARD FROM THE ANCIENT GREEK GOD OF WAR