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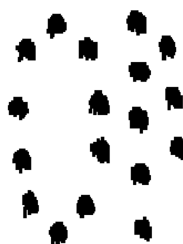

DILYS POWELL

REMEMBER GREECE

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To P—.

I hesitate, now, to address you by name even in this impersonal letter. Today, as I read that your country is to be occupied by the Italians whom she drove contemptuously from her soil, a letter reaches me from Greece. You wrote it at the end of March, when the Greek soldiers whom you were nursing still thought only of recovering to fight again. They went into battle, you told me, shouting a war-cry and yelling in their rough, lively language something which might be translated: "Smite them hip and thigh!" When their ammunition ran out they fought with sticks and stones; sometimes with their bare hands. Often they had no food, no water, no fire; the fear of death, you said, was nothing in comparison with the hardships they endured. Yet they longed to go back "to drive the Italians into the sea"—the Italians whom they pitied as much as they despised.

Their victory has been delayed only; it will yet reward them. When it comes you and I too, I hope, shall meet again.

June 11, 1941.

Author's Note

Since this book was first published Greece has endured nearly two years under occupation, and a chapter has been added bringing the record as far as possible up to date.

March, 1943

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CHAPTER I

FAREWELL TO ATHENS

SUMMER shone late over Western Europe in 1939, but in Icaria the sun had done its work by the fourth week of August: figs bursting, grapes heavy under their bloom, and the paths on the hillsides powdering beneath one's feet. The earth, saturated with the long months of heat, flung back sunlight as we crossed the ravine and skirted the walls; we were glad to reach the village after our morning's walk and sit down outside the little café. The proprietor, a tallish, stooping man with black, rough hair, a heavy moustache, and the fine-seamed, leathery brown skin of the Greek countryman, brought chairs for us and planted them in the middle of the street: one chair to sit on, one to use as a foot-rest.

"What will you have?"

"What have you got—ouzo, wine?"

"Ouzo we haven't got; wine we have—good wine."

"Wine, then—three glasses, please."

A boy had been asleep on a bench just inside the little cavern of the café; he woke up hastily, put on an apron, and came out with a blue tin mug of wine and glasses. Then he retired to the cavern and sat down to watch us silently. The proprietor sat on the low wall on the other side of the little street. He wore a faded blue shirt, a collar-stud but no collar, trousers patched at both knees,

and broken shoes; no socks, and his insteps were burned and toughened to the colour and texture of hide. With the happy ease of his people, he opened the conversation.

"Your health! . . . Hot, very hot!"

We agreed. "Very hot!"

There were two friends with me: Shan Sedgwick, the Athens correspondent of the *New York Times*, and his wife Roxane, an archaeologist, and one of the few Greek women barristers.

"Where are you from? Are you English?"

"No," said Roxane, "I am Greek. This is my husband; he is American. And this"—pointing to me—"is a friend of ours from England."

"Ah, from America! Ah, that is fine!" His face, set in the sad lines of the peasant, flowered into a smile. "I have been to America." Then, slowly and proudly, "I spik Eenglish."

"Ah, you speak English!" we cried, dropping into the tone of hearty condescension reserved by English and American travellers for the foreigner of inferior social standing who has ventured to learn their language. "Did you like America? Where did you go—New York, Chicago?"

"Chicago, Saint Louis, Detroit. Work, plenty money." He looked at the street, the flaking iron table, the café. "Eh, what's to be done!" he said in Greek.

"Are the crops good this year? Are the vines yielding well?"

"Eh, not bad, with God's help. . . . You want more wine? More wine!" he shouted. The boy slid from his bench, refilled the blue tin mug, and sat down again.

Somewhere in the distance a child shouted in a high, clear voice. The midday silence stirred, then settled once more.

"The vines are not bad this year," the man went on. "But we shall have misfortunes. . . . Your health! . . . Misfortunes," he repeated. "Eh, thank you," he said, bending forward to take a cigarette. Then, with a kind of casual melancholy, "I hear that the Russians have signed a pact with the Germans."

"The Russians and the *Germans*?" We recovered ourselves and laughed. "Oh, you mean the Russians and the British!"

"No, the Russians and the Germans."

"You must have made a mistake. The British have just sent a military mission to the Russians."

"No, it is true. The Schoolmaster told me."

"Somebody has been making fun of you."

"The Russians and the Germans, I tell you."

* * * * *

If you look for Icaria on the map, you will find it not without difficulty. Nicaria, the atlas calls it: a narrow little island in the Aegean, only forty miles or so from the Asia Minor coast; a little-visited island lying to the south of Chios and close to Samos. Baedeker does not mention it, since Baedeker's last visit to Greece was in 1909, and it was not until the Balkan War of 1912 that Icaria proclaimed its union with Greece. Even the *Guide Bleu* does no more than steam along its coast, remarking coldly, "Very abrupt". Few visitors come to Icaria, and the island cargo-boats call only twice a week. Its sparse population of peasant farmers, they say, is curiously

employed. In the summer the men go off to be charcoal burners; for a few months the villages become villages of women. In the winter the daughters take boat; the gentle, smiling girls from the fields are suddenly transformed into Athenian maidservants, neat, beaming creatures in aprons and cotton dresses; in Icaria the men sit alone through the long Aegean storms. Icaria is a little remote from the ordinary life of the islands; its very vegetation is unusual, softer and warmer than most, with its fruit trees and its straggling gardens and its occasional shadowed streams. Where better to forget the Japanese question, the mission to Moscow, the Danzig customs dispute, the Axis conference, and all the miching mallecho of international politics?

It was a charmed, unreal interlude in the hag-ridden August of 1939. We reached Icaria early on a Sunday morning; the island cargo-boat anchored a little way off the jagged coast, and we were rowed ashore in boatloads—men in shabby town clothes, women in vast skirts and coloured head-shawls, chickens tied in bunches, tin trunks, silent, seasick children. The car to take us up to the village had not come, and there was no other means of transporting our luggage; Icaria observes the general rule: one car to one road, one road to one small island. We bathed from the rocks behind the point, then went to sit in the café annexe—four poles and a roof of withered branches—above the harbour and eat fresh grilled fish, and drink, and talk in the bright, salty air. An old man with the remote, innocent severity of extreme age came to sit beside us. Under the weather-beaten straw hat his blue eyes, crinkled and rheumy, looked out to sea; he

rested his hands on a stick held between his knees and exchanged shouts with us about the year's crops, the fishing, his children and his children's children. His voice seemed to come from an immense distance: the distance of a life spent in toil, hardship, the incessant fight of a brave and self-respecting man with inexorable Nature. Now he sat down in the shade of a mat of withered branches, a tough, stubborn, undefeated old man, to talk of his children and his children's children. Well, I thought, perhaps that is how a life should be spent; here is something—a truth perhaps, a necessity certainly—which every Greek peasant understands.

The whole island shone that morning with a kind of solid brilliance, and still shone when in the afternoon we came to the village and the house where we were to stay. We had been lent a peasant house in an unkempt orchard, the property of my friends' maid and her family; the three of us dressed and washed in turn in a single room, and slept swinging in hammocks in the orchard. The first night I turned incautiously in my hammock, and plopped to the ground like a ripe fig; for the rest, we slept soundly through the soft, cool nights. Sometimes the wind whooshed vaguely in the pines on the hillside; for already autumn was overtaking summer, already, in spite of the heat, the sun, the white, dazzling light of noon, there was a feeling of change in the air, the sense of something coming to an end, something beginning to decay and die. Change indeed was in the air in August, 1939; but we did not think of that as we climbed the paths through the pine-woods or explored the desert plateau with its monstrous rocks and its waste of stones. We thought, as anyone in

so distant a landscape might think, only of the day before or behind us; of the welcome from the family in the solitary cottage on the hill; of the friend to be visited in the village a morning's walk distant. In the morning we got up to find on our doorstep bowls of figs and grapes, gifts from the people of the village and its scattered outposts; on every walk we were waylaid by Roxane's friends, friends and relations of her servant, who besought us to eat and drink with them. This was indeed the halcyon hour, the calm between the gathering winds and the storm; to think of it now is to think of the age of fable.

The days went by without news of the outside world; since the boat calls no more than twice a week, the only newspapers in the island were those which came with us. Somewhere in the village, probably at the café, there was a radio; we never listened to it. Lulled by the quiet, the warm, dying summer air, we decided not to catch the mid-week boat, but to stay on a few more days. Wednesday, we said, we would devote to visiting the village at the far end of the island. We set out early, and walked leisurely through the morning. It was the morning of Wednesday, August 23.

* * * * *

"The Russians and the Germans, I tell you."

We looked at one another uneasily. He must have got it wrong, we said; rumour flies in an island where the newspapers come only twice a week. It must be the good news we have waited for; at last Russia has declared herself on our side. We changed the subject.

"Do you know the house of Mr. Milonas?"

"Yes, the white house up on the hill; a new house it is, ith blue shutters."

"Will you do us a favour? Send a boy with this card to sk if we may call on him."

Milonas was a politician in exile from Athens; as an pponent of the Government he had been sent to Icaria. lot, as political fates go, a hard punishment, perhaps; ut a lonely one. He would be happy if we would call on im after 2.30 p.m. We retreated to the shade of a tree nd lay down on the ground. In Greece in summer everyne retires to sleep after midday. Rich and poor, townsnan and peasant, withdraw into their homes or sink into coma where they lie; the road-mender lays his head on pile of flints and sleeps with the air of a contented child. 'es, no doubt of it, the pact was between Russia and ritain. The hour crawled by. We were impatient for it pass; but then we could not know that it was the last our of the age of fable.

Indeed, said Milonas, it was true; Russia and Germany ad made a pact of non-aggression, and all Britain's plans or safeguarding Eastern Europe were blown sky-high. Vhy had not Great Britain prevented such a disaster? Iilonas and his wife looked at me with hurt, grave eproach.

* * * * *

Evening in the country in Greece is a time of calm and efreshment, but there was no calm when we came back our own village. The Greeks, even the simplest ountry people, have none of the Englishman's normal olitical apathy, and in this unsophisticated community he gravity of the news had been readily understood.

Men stood in groups in the little square under the trees; the sound of gossiping voices took on a sharper note. "Will there be war?" the women asked, their faces heavy and resigned. Yet never had the people of the island seemed gentler or more warm-hearted. We must, said one family after another next morning, come to sit in their house for a little and eat and drink with them; for when should we be in Icaria again? When indeed? The halcyon hour was past; and the afternoon sun, as, sailing away, we looked for the last time at the cliffs, the harbour, the figures waving from the shore, touched the land with melancholy.

Most of the island boats had been cancelled in the general alarm, and we had to hire a caïque to take us to Chiôs, where there was a ship sailing for Athens. Chios, a largish island near the Asia Minor coast, was the scene in 1822 of one of the Turks' most successful all-in massacres. The bones of some of the victims are kept in a chapel, neatly stacked according to type: thigh-bones in one glass-fronted cupboard, skulls in another; a visitors' book attests the number of foreign ladies who have come to gaze at the matter-of-fact mementoes. (The Chiotes, who before this unfortunate occurrence were well-treated by the Turks, are still proud of their descent, regarding themselves as among the aristocrats of Greece, and in well-to-do Athenian society today it is not uncommon to meet someone whose great-grandfather was hanged to encourage the other Chiotes.) We, too, paused to gaze. A museum quiet enveloped the evidence of past wars. But over living Chios one felt the shadow of things to come. In the cool after the August sun everyone came out

to parade along the water's edge or sit at the café tables massed in the open street; there was a confused sound of voices, music, girls' heels clicking on the cobble-stones. How long would this easy provincial life persist?

It was Saturday morning, August 26, when we reached Athens, three days since the news of the Russo-German pact had broken into the solitude of Icaria, nearly two days since the beginning of our journey back from the islands. The harbour of Piraeus wore its accustomed air of casual activity. A herd of black goats was being driven from a lighter on to a cargo-boat. One handsome billy-goat broke away from the herd, clattered across the deck, and stood with his forefeet planted on the gunwale and his beard thrust defiantly forward. The stench of goat rose powerfully towards us. Everywhere the bustle of a sea-faring, trading people: cargoes being loaded and unloaded, donkey-engines working, rowing-boats paddling here and there with baskets, crates, boxes. We went ashore and took one of the Piraeus taxis in to Athens. I had been staying, before I left for Icaria, at the British School of Archaeology, of which my husband, Humfry Payne, had been Director until his death in 1936. The present Director was away; of the students, some had decided to stay in Greece, war or no war; the rest were making what plans they could to get back to England. The place had a regretful end-of-term look: "all who here shall meet no more". Less than two years later people in England were to read of the School preparing for a possible state of siege. But through the alarms of the end of August, 1939, the English preserved their profound calm. "Bit of a dust-up", one of them admitted.

The Greeks, hurrying to buy their papers, were less phlegmatic. One thing, amidst the international uncertainties, they knew: Italy was not to be trusted, Italy was the potential enemy. It was, after all, less than five months since the Friday morning—Good Friday morning—when the Italians had occupied Albania. Italian troops were on Greece's northern border, Greek towns were within easy reach of Italian flying-fields. And the Greeks remembered other Italian treacheries. They remembered how in 1912 Italy had seized the Dodecanese from Turkey, making promises of autonomy; the islanders had welcomed and thanked their liberators—and the Italians were still in occupation after twenty-seven years. They remembered, too, the bombardment in 1923 of Corfu, undefended and crowded with refugees, as an act of vengeance for the death of an Italian delegate on the Albanian Boundary Commission and his staff: murders, indeed, on Greek territory, but never proved to have been committed by Greeks. Now, with the Great Powers threatening war, the Greeks watched Italy. Who was to say that Italian planes might not appear suddenly over Athens?

While Europe made ready for death, the Greek country people, like all the other innocent peoples of the world, went on with their traditional preparations for life. I drove down to the Argolid; the journey, about three and a half hours along an excellent road, takes one through Eleusis, along the north shore of the Saronic Gulf, across the Corinth Canal, and so through Corinth itself into the southern half of Greece, the great peninsula called the Peloponnese. In the country round Corinth men and women were at work in the vineyards. The grapes—

currant grapes—had been gathered, and were spread out on long trestles or huge strips of cloth to dry. One might have forgotten the European crisis; but from the road, which for much of the way runs beside the railway track, one saw now and then a train full of troops moving north. In Athens again, nothing but radio bulletins, newspapers, talk. Even the weather, usually blazing from mid-May to October, turned traitor, and the streets glistened with soft, melancholy summer rain.

But it was a fine bright morning when I left Greece at last. If there is war, I thought as the plane roared high over the Greek mountains and out across the sea, then for the first time for thirteen years I shall be quite cut off from Greece. Only once since 1926 have I missed the summer in Greece. Now years may pass without my seeing again these gay, self-dependent people and this calm, brilliant landscape. There were many things, at that moment, which obstinately would not be forgotten, ironic things as well as romantic, trivial as well as weighty: the rumour of laughing and singing at night from the cafés on the slopes of Lykabettos; shadows of cypresses lying across moonlit streets; the lights of Athens, a glittering net spread towards Hymettos and Phaleron. Now we have more to remember. There will be little singing this year or any year till peace comes: nor will the water-front be bright with the lights of tavernas from Phaleron to Glyfada. The lights of Athens have been blacked out. But we who are her debtors shall remember what we owe; they will be lit again. Until that day the easy, casual, traditional life of the city holds on in recollection at least. There imagination watches the flower-

sellers haggling over the price of an almond-branch, and presenting the defeated buyer with a bunch of violets to show there is no ill-feeling. Obstinate goats are still tethered at the side of the boulevards leading north and east. Buses tear down the hilly streets of Lykabettos; and over their screeching one hears the street-cries: Brooms to sell, Strawberries, Apricots, Figs, and the lovely phrase: Mandarins! Mandarins! I have sweet mandarins!

CHAPTER II

THE APPROACH OF WAR

THE story of Greece for fourteen months from the end of August, 1939, is the story of a threatened spectator; to understand the full significance of her entry into the war in October, 1940, it is necessary to understand something of the position within Greece as well as to consider her reactions to the events in the outside world.

Since the Great War and the Asia Minor catastrophe of 1922 Greece had been split roughly into two factions, one Venizelist, one Royalist. The Venizelists accused the Royalists of having by incompetence and corruption brought about the defeat of the Greek Army in Asia Minor and the loss to Greece of Smyrna. The Royalists blamed the Venizelists for the disruption of the country's unity and held Venizelos personally guilty of the summary execution of the Cabinet Ministers and the Commander-in-Chief after the disaster. King Constantine abdicated in 1922, and was succeeded by the present King George II, who himself went into exile in December, 1923. From that date until 1935, when the monarchy was restored, Greece was, with one brief interval, a Republic, ruled by a variety of Governments constitutionally elected but short-lived. The feud persisted. From time to time the course of democratic government was interrupted by more violent passages: in 1925–6, for instance, by General

Pangalos' attempt at a Dictatorship; in 1933 by the one-day Dictatorship of General Plastiras, a Venizelist supporter taking advantage of an indecisive poll at the elections; in 1935 by the Venizelist revolt of March 1, a revolt which split the country and did much harm to the cause of democratic government. Violence was far from being all on the Venizelist side, as the attempt—the "Abominable Attempt", as it was called—on Venizelos's own life in June, 1933, testified; and though there were periods when some kind of *rapprochement* between the two parties seemed possible, the breach was always widened again.

The restoration of the monarchy in October, 1935, and the return of King George—a return in the success of which Venizelos himself played no small part—promised a move at last towards the sinking of differences. The new reign began well with the offer of an amnesty for political prisoners. But soon the old game of party politics was in full swing; disagreement led to deadlock; and when in the spring of 1936 a general election was held, no decisive majority resulted. As so often in the history of Greek politics, the opportunity was waiting for the man of action. General Metaxas, who had been called in by the King as his Prime Minister, acted on August 4, 1936. There was talk of forestalling the Communists; martial law was proclaimed; and Parliament was dissolved.

From then until his death in January, 1941, Metaxas was virtual Dictator of his country. He did many unpopular things; he also did many praiseworthy things: he must, for instance, be given the credit for appointing

as his Minister of Public Welfare Korizis, who was to succeed him as Prime Minister of Greece, and for supporting him in a sweeping programme of reform in the departments of national health and hygiene. Above all, he re-armed Greece. In the summer of 1937, a year after the *coup d'état* which put him in power, I had a long conversation with him in which he discussed the aims of his domestic and foreign policy. It was hinted at the time that Metaxas was pro-German: the rumours sprang in part, no doubt, from the fact that he studied soldiering at the Kriegsakademie in Germany, where he was nicknamed "the little Moltke" and received a telegram of congratulation from the Kaiser; partly also from the difficult financial situation of Greece, bound, like the rest of South-eastern Europe, by clearing agreements with Germany. The General, plump and amiable, with the air rather of a cultivated business man than of a Dictator, insisted that the interests of Greece were Mediterranean and not Continental.

"Greece", he said, "is not a sentimental country. England, a large, rich, and powerful country, can afford to let herself be governed by sentimental considerations. My country is small; she is poor; her policy must of necessity be governed by practical considerations. I ask you to consider her geographical position. She is a Mediterranean country and has no interests outside the Mediterranean. England, with whom we have traditional ties of friendship, is a great Mediterranean Power. We are bound to England by all our interests."

And then, speaking in fluent and forcible French, Metaxas went on to say something the full import of

which was not manifest until the end of 1940, three years later.

"Greece is by tradition and reason the friend of England. I am working to make Greece an Ally worth having."

But in the years between August, 1936, and the entry of Greece into the war Metaxas's achievement in the rearmament of his country was not always appreciated. The four years which included the Spanish Civil War, the assault on China, the Austrian Anschluss, the engulfment of Czechoslovakia, the Fourth Partition of Poland, and the enslavement of Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, and half France were too noisy for the defences of a small agricultural nation in the Balkans to attract much attention. The outside world did not take very seriously Greece's expenditure on defence purposes. Within Greece, too, there were doubters.

In many ways, indeed, the Government of General Metaxas aroused not merely scepticism but violent opposition. The opposition was driven underground by censorship and other means of suppression, but it persisted. It persisted until in the summer and autumn of 1940 the Greeks saw their Government courageous and dignified in the face of menace and danger; it persisted, perhaps, until they saw that there was to be no selling of the pass. And then it was that the Greeks achieved the unity of purpose which they had been seeking for twenty years and more: a unity which astonished the world.

At the beginning of the Second World War Greece's foreign relations were as follows. In 1934 the Balkan Pact had been signed by Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia,

and Rumania; Greece's closest understanding, however, was believed to be with Turkey, the virtual head of the Pact, and it would have seemed natural that she should in matters of foreign policy follow where Turkey led. From Great Britain and France she had a unilateral guarantee, offered and accepted immediately on the occupation of Albania by Italy. With Italy her relations were outwardly cordial, expressed in a Treaty of Friendship, Conciliation and Judicial Settlement signed in September, 1928.

The Albanian affair had, however, been something of a setback to friendship and conciliation. On April 6, 1939, formal assurances had been given in London that Italy had no intention of violating Albanian territory; the next day the occupation began and King Zog fled to Greece. The Greek Government behaved with discretion and restraint. Greek representatives in Albania were told to discourage anti-Italian demonstrations among their nationals; Italy was promised that Zog would not be permitted to abuse Greek hospitality by indulging in political activity. With his own hand Mussolini wrote a telegram to the Italian Chargé d'Affaires in Athens instructing him to thank the Greek Prime Minister, and on April 10 Italy repeated "her intention to respect absolutely the integrity of both the Greek mainland and islands". Still troops poured into Albania, and among the officers there was much talk of an impending attack on Greece.

It was in these circumstances that the Anglo-French guarantee had been given to Rumania and Greece. The news was sourly received in Italy, where it was implied

that the Italian guarantee ought to have been enough; and at a State banquet a month later Mussolini, wearing, said the Greek Minister in Rome, "a preoccupied and somewhat aggrieved air", remarked that "a country, in its political friendships, should know how to discriminate between its closer and its more remote friends". Not until after the outbreak of war in September was tension relaxed: troops on both sides of the Albanian frontier were withdrawn, and friendly letters were published between the Greek Prime Minister and the Italian Minister in Athens reaffirming the principles of the Treaty of 1928. It is important to note that the discretion of the Greek attitude throughout was not the discretion of timidity. On the contrary, in a conversation with the Italian Minister on August 21, 1939, Metaxas, after taxing Italy with general hostility and with misgovernment of the Dodecanese in particular, left no doubt that his country would fight if necessary. The Italian protested that the hostility would stop if there were no fears of Greek hostility. "Allow me", said Metaxas, "to have my doubts, although I pray it may be so with all my heart, and do hope that you yourself will contribute to remove this unjust feeling of prejudice against Greece. However, I again repeat to you that, should an attack be made on the integrity of our territory, or should our vital interests be assailed, in that case we would fight to defend them."

There, through the heavy days of the winter and spring of 1939–40, the affair rested. For the first eight months of the war, the name of Greece was scarcely mentioned in international politics. You might have searched day after day in the columns of the English papers for news

from Greece; it was not to be found. Letters from Athens spoke of certain precautionary measures. There was, they said, some rationing. Potatoes had been planted in some of the public squares—in Constitution Square, the charming centre of Athens with its grand hotels and its massed café tables overlooked by the former Royal Palace; in Concord Square, noisy with omnibuses and trams; in Kolonaki, the pretty little square at the foot of Lykabettos. The Benaki Museum was packing up its fine collection of Greek embroideries and jewellery; other museums, said my correspondent, preferred to wait and see. A number of young women in Athens were training to be nurses. For the rest, life went on as before. In the winter of 1939–40, Greece, at peace, seemed no more troubled than England at war.

The sympathies of the majority of the Greek people, however, were clear enough. In spite of the strict censorship of the Press, a censorship which insisted on neutrality, it had always been easy to recognise the common feeling of the country in favour of the democracies. Hatred and contempt for Italy were general in Greece. Traditional friendship with Great Britain, ties of culture with France, admiration for the wealthy civilisation of America, an admiration fostered by many a poor emigrant come back to Greece—all these strongly affected the Greek spectator of the distant war.

He was to need all his confidence in the Allies. The collapse of Poland, with not a hand lifted to help her, may perhaps have been gradually forgotten in the months of inaction. But with the spring came all the other catastrophes of our melancholy recitative: Denmark overrun

and the British chased out of Norway; the Dutch beaten, the Belgian army surrendered, the British Expeditionary Force escaping by the skin of its teeth at Dunkirk; last and most dreadful, the fall of Paris and the capitulation of "the finest army in the world". Early in this tale of disaster letters from Greece had been solicitous, anxious, distressed; with the defection of France they were aghast. Like the rest of us, the Greeks could not believe it. Greece was presented by the French collapse and Italy's entry into the war with a grave problem. Her independence had been guaranteed by Great Britain and France. But how far could the guarantee be honoured without France and the French Fleet?

Already in May there had been signs that the Mediterranean could not hope for long to be left in peace. Since the end of April British ships had been using the Cape route; and Chamberlain announced, simultaneously with the withdrawal of all Allied troops in Norway south of Trondheim, the movement of a powerful Allied Fleet to the Eastern Mediterranean. The Axis were at their old game of threats, and, as usual, the threats were double-edged; reports that R.A.F. pilots were already in Athens, and that Great Britain was on the point of violating Balkan neutrality, were neatly synchronised with claims to Corfu and reports of massive German troop movements in Austria. The fact that the reports were the preliminary, not to a Balkan drive, but to the invasion of the Low Countries, was not allowed to reassure South-eastern Europe for long. In May Italy gave informal assurances to Yugoslavia and Greece that she had no aggressive intentions against either; but within a week Germany was

accusing Greece of permitting British aircraft to use her territory, there was a crop of stories about German "tourists" in Bulgaria, and as for Italy's entry into the war, the question, it was blandly announced, was not whether, but when.

It was on June 10 that Mussolini, having, no doubt, consulted the entrails of massacred France in the ancient Roman manner, gave the signal for war, adding:

"I solemnly declare that Italy has no intention of dragging into the conflict other nations who are her neighbours by sea or by land. Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey, and Egypt should take note of these words of mine. On them and only on them it depends whether these promises shall be maintained or not."

From this moment Greece was drawn every week closer to the orbit of war. After the French capitulation she was left with one guarantor, Great Britain, and one supporter, Turkey. But the fabric of security in the Mediterranean had rotted away: the French Fleet out of action, French forces in Syria no longer to be counted on, and the British in Egypt, deprived of support from Tunis, now threatened on their Western, Libyan flank. Before long Greece was to see another bulwark crumbling: the Balkan Pact, always, perhaps, a flimsy bulwark, but at least a pledge of a common desire for peace. By the autumn there must have seemed to Greek eyes little left in Europe that was solid and faithful. It is well to remember this in judging of her courage at the end of October, 1940.

More than four months, however, were to go by after the Duce's solemn declaration before Italy was to pro-

ed yet farther on her career of Non-Aggression; and in
iose months Greece, having read the cautionary tales
f Scandinavia, the Netherlands, and Eastern and Central
urope, was to be treated to a full-dress war of nerves.
his interval for rehearsal resolves itself roughly into two
eriods. In the first, there is the procedure, by now
miliar, of preparing the ground for attack by accusa-
ions, threats, and acts of calculated terrorism. In the
econd, menace becomes grandiose; Greece is intended
o feel that she is merely a pawn in a gigantic campaign;
nd to the threat against her individual integrity is added
he threat against all South-eastern Europe; the conflagra-
ion will be not particular but general.

Threats from Italy were not long in beginning. Eight
lays after the Italian declaration of war Ciano's deputy,
Anfuso, complained "with a stern air" to M. Politis, the
Greek Minister in Rome, that a British aircraft-carrier,
some cruisers, and destroyers were in Cretan waters and
had stayed there more than twenty-four hours. The re-
port was false, and next day M. Politis called to say so.
Anfuso, all regret, telephoned reproachfully to the Ad-
miral who had communicated it. Another eight days, and
a fresh story was found: the Greek Minister in Ankara
was intriguing against the Axis; "it would be as well if
he was recalled". This time there was no apology;
Politis, however, clearly a diplomat of unusual spirit as
well as foresight, countered with a complaint that his
Legation was shadowed by detectives "who took down
the names of the callers, kept a watch on everything which
was going on and even ventured to pry with indiscreet
eyes into the court of the Legation". Ciano, "in obvious

embarrassment", replied that these police measures were obviously intended for the Legation's protection, and after a smart retort from M. Politis "relapsed into the usual effusive compliments".

The Italian Foreign Minister returned to the attack with more complaints ("in an offensive and somewhat angry tone") about warships in Greek territorial waters: four British destroyers had anchored in the port of Melos; it was, he added, time that the Greeks "realised that the Axis had won" and that they "stopped living in a Fool's paradise and backing both sides". But, Greece replied, the destroyers were her own. Feeling, perhaps, that she was not coming out of these verbal encounters very well, Italy now took stronger measures. A Greek ship off Crete on her way to supply a lighthouse was bombed and machine-gunned, and a destroyer going to her help was also attacked. Not long after Greek destroyers and submarines anchored at Naupaktos were bombed; and presently an attack was made on a coastguard vessel near Aegina.

These, however, were only preliminaries. On August 11 it was announced that "a deep impression had been produced on the Albanian populace under Greek rule by a terrible political crime committed on the Greco-Albanian border". The murdered man, Daout Hodja, was claimed as an Albanian patriot known for "untiring propaganda" for the "return" of Tsamuria, a district of Epirus incorporated in Greece in 1913. The circumstances of the patriot's martyrdom, according to the Italian newspapers, were characteristic of Greek terrorism; he had been decapitated by two Greek shepherds and

his head shown from village to village as a warning to the "unredeemed Albanian brethren". It was "not the only episode in Greece's policy of oppression". Suddenly Italy presented herself as the champion of the Albanian minority in Epirus, with a "sacred duty" to defend Albania's frontiers; even, it seemed, to extend them.

The Italian Government, it was announced, intended lodging a strong protest in Athens. But, said the Greeks, Daout Hodja was not a patriot, but a brigand on whose head a price had been set twenty years ago; he had been several times convicted of murder; and he had been killed not by Greeks but by two Albanians who had been arrested as soon as they crossed the border. The Italian Legation in Athens had been immediately told of their arrest, and all that now remained was for an application to be made for their extradition. Indemnity, vengeance! cried Gayda, not to be discouraged; the murder was clearly part of a vast plot, "a link in a chain of terrorism against Albania forged in Athens, where help from England was counted on".

Connivance with Great Britain was more and more stressed. It was, said the *Popolo di Roma*, "known that during the past two years the Shell Co. have established more than 200 well-stocked oil-bases at strategic points along the coastline and on Greek islands to refuel British aero-naval forces operating in the Eastern Mediterranean". This was an old gambit; but nobody was prepared for the next one.

The island of Tenos, one of the nearer Cyclades, and within perhaps nine hours of Piraeus, is famous for a

church with a miraculous image of the Virgin; pilgrims from all over Greece congregate here for the Feast of the Assumption on August 15. On August 15, 1940, the little town was, as usual, full, and the *Helle*, a light cruiser of the Greek Navy, was on ceremonial guard, anchored half a mile from the shore. Many sick people had come, praying to be cured of their ills; the quay was crowded with men and women and children. Did the "unknown submarine" which appeared take the little *Helle*, gay with flags and pennants as she lay at anchor, for the *Ark Royal*, and the children on the shore for Shell agents stocking yet another oil-base? We know only that three torpedoes were fired. One struck the *Helle* amidships, killing one and injuring twenty-nine of the crew. The second and third torpedoes struck the crowded shore. Presently the *Helle* sank.

The submarines having done their job, the Air Force now set to work again, and the *Frinton*, an amiable old passenger and cargo ship which in times of peace used to do the crossing to Brindisi, was attacked off the north of Crete. Meanwhile an Albanian paper (naturally under Italian control) was producing lists of imaginary crimes by Greek authorities: terrorism, murders, eighty Albanian villagers shut up in a church and burned alive. The Greeks, who might well have talked of murders, were silent. Although torpedo fragments proved that the submarine of Tenos was Italian, the Athens newspapers gave no sign that its nationality was known. But popular feeling was less discreet. The sinking of the *Helle*, it is said, did more for the cause of Britain than any propaganda could do. The Greeks very reasonably felt that the out-

rage was aggravated by its occasion. Popular religious sentiment was excited; there was a violent swing of opinion in favour of the Allies; and when an Army store in Piraeus was destroyed by fire the incident was put down without more ado to Italian sabotage.

The Government, then, held on its neutral course, but displayed in its neutrality both dignity and resource. The approaches to the Gulf of Arta, which leads straight to the heart of the province of Epirus, were mined; unobtrusively special Army units were called up. Meanwhile British promises of help by the Air Force and the Navy were repeated. The usual Axis minatory bellowing, the usual reluctance to stake a claim and stick to it. In face of this Metaxas was resolute. Behind him, Greece was united.

This was the position at the end of August. In the following weeks the war of nerves on Greece passes into its second phase; Germany takes a hand, and to the naïve gangster tactics of Mussolini are added the enormous feints and lunges of Hitler's schemes for conquest. People in England are apt to think of August, September, and October, 1940, as months in which Germany's whole effort was turned directly against this country. We forget the intrigues, the manoeuvres in Central and South-eastern Europe—the bargaining over Rumania: first Russia in June, then Bulgaria and Hungary in August, making good their claims to tracts of Rumanian territory, while Germany first stands ostentatiously aside, then plays her hand in a mockery of arbitration; Rumania's renunciation in July of the Anglo-French guarantee followed in September by an official "attitude of reserve"

to the Western Powers; the deadly tide of tanks, guns, planes creeping eastward to the Black Sea.

Greece, watching as the long summer waned, was heartened, no doubt, by the spectacle of Germany checked at last in the Battle of Britain: the massed daylight air attacks of August and September broken, the night raids of the autumn endured without weakness. But at the end of August her attention was held by dangers nearer home. Italian troops had advanced into the demilitarised zone on the Greco-Albanian frontier; there were reports of large reinforcements reaching Albania; and from Berlin came attacks on Greek shippers who accepted the British navicert system. There was the case of the three cargo-ships at Alexandria laden with Egyptian wheat and bound for Greece, and equipped with both British navicerts and Italian visas; on the point of sailing they were warned that the Italian visas had been cancelled, and that if they proceeded they would be stopped or sunk. But still the Greek Government, it seemed, hoped for German friendship, and at the end of August a representative was sent to Berlin to prepare the way for negotiations for a new clearing agreement. Germany, too, was still not ready to abandon the friendly approach; Germany, who had long seen the advantages, blindly neglected by Great Britain, of buying the Balkan tobacco crop and with it Balkan friendship, was now paying attention to Crete, where her merchants that summer bought up disproportionate quantities of the currant crop, varying their activities by trying to stir up feeling against Great Britain.

We know now that official relations between Greece

and Germany were still sufficiently civil for Metaxas, when the Italian assault was imminent, to appeal to Hitler. In an open letter of reproach to the Führer, published on March 8, 1941, in an Athens newspaper, the editor wrote:

"Greece at that moment had, besides her peaceful intentions, additional guarantees of security, two signatures, one Italian, the other British. Yet when Greece had tangible proof of the impending Italian attack, and was thus persuaded that the one signature was valueless, she did not turn, as she should have, to the other, but turned—your Excellency will remember—to you. Greece asked for your protection."

In the light of later events Greece's appeal to Germany to restrain her Axis partner has a sad irony; it was answered, of course, only with the advice not to give provocation. Other small countries before had asked for protection and been refused it; and had, in their dismay and confusion, sunk at last to buying it with their integrity. Greece was not dismayed. Amidst the noise of troop movements, threats, rumours, she went about her preparations; she did not mobilise, but heard with satisfaction the reiteration on September 5 of Great Britain's guarantee. Towards the end of September there were talks with Turkey, who throughout the period of tension supported Greece.

News from the outside world in September was not all as encouraging as the defeat of the German Air Force. There was, for instance, the Dakar fiasco, rapidly followed by the Axis Pact with Japan. Before this, the Italian Army in Libya had crossed the frontier and advanced eighty

miles into Egypt. Meanwhile there were more threats from German newspapers and radio. Greece was the "last intrigue centre". Greece had sinned against neutrality by giving help to a 10,000-ton British cruiser, which when damaged had sought shelter in the Piraeus. Ribbentrop visited Rome; there were reports that Germany had agreed, though without enthusiasm, to give Italy her head.

It is at this point that Germany's Balkan strategy begins to take shape. On October 4, 1940, Hitler and Mussolini held one of their meetings on the Brenner Pass. Three days later German troops were reported to be entering Rumania; by the middle of the month they were arriving in force. Rumania had, in fact, been occupied; one of the four signatories of the Balkan Pact had fallen, and the three still standing, Turkey, Yugoslavia, and Greece, saw the danger to their independence draw nearer. And to the vague Axis rumblings—a drive against Turkey; simultaneous action against Syria, Greece, Egypt, and Gibraltar—succeeded a clearly-defined threat.

Up to now Axis propagandists had been ingeniously occupied in distracting attention from the main issue. Albania was to be given this, Bulgaria was to be given that; a broadcast in Greek from Berlin urged Greek brides to put off their weddings and wait to be married in Constantinople—in St. Sophia, which the devout Hitler would win back to Christianity. Now the suggestion was current that, at the Brenner meeting, Hitler had told Mussolini that he was about to prepare for the military occupation of the Balkans as the first phase of a drive to

the Straits, the oilfields of the Middle East, and Suez. The suggestion was supported by German rumours of a plan to occupy Bulgaria. Here, in short, was the start of the pincer movement in the Mediterranean. On the one flank, Italy advancing across Egypt; on the other, Germany, with Italy's concurrence, moving through the Balkans and eastward. Later, in the spring of 1941, the details, perhaps, were to be changed; in essence the strategy held.

It was not to Greece that most people looked to hold up the Axis advance; Italy scarcely expected her to resist at all. Had she submitted without a fight, as it seems that Italy expected her to submit, the story of the Balkan drive might have been very different. It is one of the miracles of human dignity that she became the first bulwark against the Axis advance.

* * * * *

The subjugation of Rumania gave the signal for the last outburst of Italian threats and claims. Once more Greece was held up to shame as the oppressor. Epirus, the border province, was Albanian and must return to Albania; what was more, Salonika was really Bulgarian. Anyhow, the circulation of British newspapers in Greece must stop at once. Troops massed on the border, Italian planes flew constantly over Greek territory. It was a cold autumn in Southern Greece, the coldest for years, and already by the third week in October the rains had begun in Epirus. Greece made ready for the winter not of wind and snow only, but of war. It had been a poor harvest that summer, and at the best of times the country im-

ported a considerable proportion of her wheat; the Government, fearing a shortage of bread, arranged for supplies from Russia. Agricultural experts went about the country advising farmers how best to conserve the resources of the land. There was an air of readiness.

The fourth week of October brought a certain dissipation of the excitement in the Mediterranean. The visit of Eden to Egypt was followed by an unwonted burst of enthusiasm for travel on the part of Hitler. On October 24 he was visiting General Franco on the Spanish frontier, the next day he saw Marshal Pétain. Spain and the attitude of the Vichy Government had the attention of the world, and in Turkey it was said that Germany was unwilling for Italy to move before the spring. The Italian Minister in Athens, full of Southern courtesy, gave a party at the Legation on the evening of October 26. The Athenians are a sociable people, but the party was poorly attended; only those went who were compelled by official civility. October 26 was a Saturday. At 3 o'clock on the morning of Monday, October 28, the Italian Minister called on Metaxas with an ultimatum demanding free passage for Italian troops to certain strategic points in Greece, with, of course, "full respect of Greece's sovereignty". Which points? Metaxas asked with pardonable curiosity. Signor Grazzi had no idea; he knew only that the ultimatum expired at six o'clock.

The Greek Prime Minister rejected the ultimatum. He regarded it, he said, as a declaration of war. At 5.30 a.m. —half an hour before it was due to expire—the Italians were advancing to the attack on the Albanian frontier. In

Patras that morning men hurrying off to work saw planes in the sky; nobody imagined they could be anything but Greek planes. It was only when the bombing began that the people of Patras knew that war had come at last.

CHAPTER III

THE GOOD FIGHT

On October 28, 1940, the Greek General Staff issued their first war *communiqué*:

"Since 5.30 this morning Italian military forces have been attacking our advanced units on the Greco-Albanian frontier.

"Our forces are defending the national soil."

Few people in the outside world had great hopes of the Greek power to resist. Five years earlier, after all, Italy had defied the other Great Powers, and even Great Britain had not been able to prevent the seizure of Abyssinia. How was a nation such as Greece, with her tiny resources, to hold out against a Power with a large and experienced Army and a formidable Navy and Air Force? Italy certainly did not expect much opposition; the terms of the ultimatum made that clear. After repeating the charges of provocation—terrorism in Tsamuria, use of Greek territorial waters by British warships, refuelling of British Air Forces, neutrality tending to become "purely nominal" —it announced that the Italian Government had

". . . decided to demand from the Hellenic Government as a guarantee alike of the neutrality of Greece and the security of Italy the right to occupy with her armed forces, for the duration of the present conflict with Great Britain, a number of strategic points in Greek territory.

The Italian Government demand that the Hellenic Government shall not oppose any resistance to this occupation nor impede the free passage of the forces destined for this purpose. The forces in question do not come as enemies of the Greek people, nor have the Italian Government, in proceeding to this temporary occupation of certain strategic points—an occupation rendered necessary by the circumstances and of a purely defensive character—the least intention of prejudicing the sovereignty and the independence of Greece.

"The Italian Government demand that the Hellenic Government instantly issue the necessary orders to the military authorities, so that the occupation may be carried out peaceably. Should the Italian forces meet with resistance, the resistance will be crushed by force of arms, and in that case the Hellenic Government will bear the responsibility for whatever may ensue."

Two days after the ultimatum and the invasion the Rome radio was blandly declaring that no serious operations had at the start been undertaken "to give the Greeks time to capitulate".

Probably the only people entirely confident of Greece's ability to resist were the Greeks themselves. One might have supposed that October 28, the day of the outbreak of war, would be a day of anxiety and alarm in Athens. It was, on the contrary, a day of celebration. At last the people could express publicly their hatred of Mussolini, at last they could boo and hiss in the cinema; the civility imposed on them by the careful neutrality of their Government was imposed no longer, and the general contempt for the Italian need no longer be suppressed.

It is worth remembering that the Greeks have long despised the Italians: the macaroni men, they call them facetiously, much as a British jingo might talk of the ice-creamers. The outbreak of war gave the Greeks a chance to reply to the affronts and the threats of the past six months. "Today," an Athenian girl wrote joyfully, "the clouds have broken." But the friends of Greece remembered the fate of Poland, Norway, the Low Countries, and France, and looked forward with foreboding.

Italy lacked Germany's experience in Blitzkrieg, but, counting, no doubt, on either immediate surrender or a quick collapse of resistance, the Italian Forces made their moves of lightning attack. There were, on the first day, beside the air attack on Patras, raids on Tatoi, the aerodrome of Athens, and the bridge over the Corinth Canal, and presently Piraeus and Salonika were bombed. On land there was a threatening advance across the Albanian border. The invaders moved in two main thrusts, eastwards towards Florina, which is on the road to Salonika, and south towards Yanina, that is to say through the disputed district of Tsamuria in Epirus. Winter had set in; in these first days the transport of supplies to the troops on the Greek frontier was no easy matter, and the peasants of the neighbourhood came to help; the women loaded and led the mules, and brought out the treasures of their dowries, coverlets and blankets, that the soldiers might not go cold. Slowly the Greeks withdrew south in Epirus, over the Kalamas River. But in the northern part of the front, near Florina, they advanced in the direction of Koritza, just over the Albanian border. Meanwhile the promises of British support, reiterated at the outbreak of war, began

to take shape. The British Navy and the R.A.F., it was announced, were operating from new bases, British forces had landed in Crete, and British fighter planes were helping the Greek Air Force to drive off raiders on Piraeus. Ten days after the Italian assault the first British casualty was mourned in Greece; a young airman, whose funeral was attended by the Greek Prime Minister himself.

Germany was still on outwardly friendly terms with Greece, and there were hints about mediation. There was in particular a report in a Belgrade newspaper to which it was thought proper to make an official reply.

"We can declare", said the statement, "once for all that the Greek Government have never sought nor will ever seek anybody's mediation in the struggle against Italy, which they are determined to carry through to the very end."

Not at first did the spectators of the Greco-Italian war understand how little Greece was in need of the offices of a mediator. Prisoners from the northern front were said to be passing through Salonika, but near the coast in Epirus, on the other hand, the defenders had fallen back from the River Kalamas to the Acheron. Pessimists recalled once more the stories of Polish cavalry successes in September, 1939; the Greek advance on Koritza, they felt, must be judged with Poland in mind. Fighting was going on in the region between the Kalamas and the Koritza sector, a region where rivers ran through gorges westward from the Pindus range. Here, too, the enemy had advanced. Italian mountain troops—Alpini—had moved into the valleys of the Aoos and its tributary, the Sarandaporos, with the intention of breaking through into

the plains of Epirus and Thessaly. Suddenly the accounts of Greek successes grew clear.

The Alpini had, indeed, advanced into the Pindus gorges; and there they were trapped. The Greeks had climbed the ranges which shut in the valleys and cut off their retreat. A fortnight from the beginning of the invasion the Greeks had taken several thousand prisoners and much war material, and the Italians, having been the attackers, were now mining bridges and roads in preparation for the defensive. The balance of battle had changed. Italy, instead of occupying a small, cowed country, as she had expected, was forced to fight for her own possessions. Most significant of all, an Axis Power was on the defensive. For the first time there was evidence that the Axis was not invincible on land.

There were, of course, anxious days ahead for the Greek Army. By the middle of November a major battle was in progress along the whole front, four-fifths of which was by then in enemy territory. The little Greek Air Force, helped by the R.A.F., was fighting back with success. But more support in the air was desperately needed; Italian dive-bombers were causing much loss to the Greek troops, who were often completely unprotected; and an appeal went out for more planes. Enough help came to enable the advance on Koritza to continue. It seems that at this moment the Greeks made a feint. Their General Staff let it appear that the vital point was the Koritza sector, and the Italians were deceived into hurrying up reinforcements. The Greeks then attacked on the left wing—that is to say, in Epirus—and drove back the

enemy, who were obliged in consequence to evacuate Koritza as well.

Koritza fell on November 22, 1940. In Athens the bells were rung, and the German Legation, cordial to the point of effrontery, hoisted a Greek flag in honour of the occasion. Amidst the rejoicings the fact that two days earlier Hungary had joined the Three-Power Pact between Germany, Italy, and Japan was obscured. The Italians were in retreat, pursued often by their own captured tanks; British forces in the shape of R.A.F. auxiliary services were landing on the mainland; and Greece had proved beyond the wildest hopes that she was more than a match for the powerful neighbour who had for so many years threatened her.

Soon there were more victories to celebrate. Pogradets, in the extreme north, was taken, Premeti, in the south, occupied; a fortnight after the capture of Koritza, Santi Quaranta, a port on the Albanian coast just north of Corfu, fell into Greek hands, and the resignation of Badoglio, Supreme Commander of the Italian Army, showed that the Italian reverses were regarded as serious. On December 8 Argyrokastro, an inland town in the south of Albania, was taken. Again the bells of Athens were rung. Before Christmas, Chimara, on the coast about twenty-five miles north of Santi Quaranta, had fallen—a cause for especial rejoicing, since its population was entirely Greek. By the end of 1940, after two months of a war which had been forced on them, the Greeks were in possession of more than a quarter of Albania.

The Greek successes were substantial. But they had not been won without suffering. In the Ionian Islands,

Italian raiders had devastated towns and villages. Kephallenia, Zakynthos, and Leukas had been bombed without mercy; in Corfu, which was known to be unfortified, the harbour town had been utterly destroyed and the population, those few of them who had not fled to the inland villages, lived as best they could in cellars or dug-outs. Patras, at the entrance to the Gulf of Corinth, was in the same condition. By spring Prevesa, a little harbour at the entrance of the Gulf of Arta which used to serve as the port for Yanina, was in ruins. Epirus, indeed, which had borne the brunt of the Italian invasion, was in grave straits, with its people starving. And all over Greece beasts of burden had been commandeered and the whole system of transport bent to the purposes of war; the life of the country was out of joint. Still the people endured, and even the women and the children would have fought.

The soldiers themselves fought with little reward except the applause of their country. The pay of a Greek private was two drachmae a day—less than a penny. Their rations were bread, olives, raisins, tea, cognac, but in the stress of battle these modest commons were often much reduced, and at the beginning of the war men lived for days together on nothing but bread. The terrain was appalling. Snow lay deep on the mountains, but the Greeks clung to posts sometimes at a height of six thousand feet. Columns bringing supplies dug their way through snow-bound passes. Mules were the only possible form of transport, but much of the time mules even could not be used. The men dragged their guns up the mountain-sides to positions seemingly inaccessible; they struggled through snowstorms and appeared on improb-

able heights to surprise an unwary enemy. The strategy of the General Staff, executed with fantastic endurance and audacity, was based as much on knowledge of the troops as on knowledge of the country: the men would do anything and live on nothing.

Those who talked with the wounded say they were sustained by a conviction of justice. The Virgin, they said, as they lay in the sad, ill-equipped hospitals, was on their side in the fight for the soil of Greece, the Virgin, affronted when the *Helle* was sunk before her shrine on Tenos, went into battle with them. They had no respite; the winter, beginning early and persisting late in the mountains of Macedonia and Albania, offered no armistice. Through the long, bitter months the struggle went on, the Greeks now advancing slowly over the wild country, now halted by blizzards or rainstorms which turned streams into torrents. The Italians were outfought and outwitted. At the start they had pressed forward without troubling to secure the hills on their flanks. The Greeks climbed the ranges which dominated the passes, they flung themselves on the enemy with guns and bayonets and knives. Deliberate, methodical, they made sure of the heights before attacking the town, or the village, or the post in the valley. Essentially their tactics were the tactics of a mountain people.

The spectacular successes were all achieved before the end of 1940, and at the beginning of the new year the Greek advance was slow. Early in January Klisura was taken—a strategic point between Koritza and Argyrokastro, approached by difficult defiles; the attack had long been held up by the ferocity of the climate. After that

there were weeks without dramatic news from Greece. The focus of the war had moved for the time to the other side of the Mediterranean, where the British followed their advance across Cyrenaica by the campaign in Eritrea, Somaliland, and Abyssinia. The Greeks watched with satisfaction the successes of their ally in Africa, as they had applauded the achievements of the British Navy in the Mediterranean since the outbreak of the Greco-Italian war, and as they had welcomed the help of the R.A.F. on their own front. There were pleasing stories of the good relations, so rare with military allies, between the Greeks and the British. On the first day of the war all English people in Athens were hailed, and a newspaper correspondent, walking abstractedly down the road, found himself clapped on the back by a band of street urchins. British soldiers, when they arrived, were chaired by the crowds. The fall of Koritza, Argyrokastro, Chimara brought renewed enthusiasm; again embarrassed British soldiers, with Greek flags pressed into their hands, were carried shoulder high in Athens.

On the Albanian front Greek troops watched the air battles above them. "We vowed a candle for his safety, and we crossed ourselves," said a Greek who had seen a contest between a Hurricane pilot and two Italian planes. After a successful dog-fight the British pilot made a forced landing; the Greeks rushed to help him, to give him their food, their coats even. Some time later the Englishman flew over the lines again, and dropped a net with sweets, cigarettes, and cognac "inscribed in bad Greek, 'To my brothers, the Greek soldiers, with a thousand thanks' ".

In Albania the land war was stubbornly carried on: a few

prisoners here, a hill captured there; on the Italian side General Soddu, the Commander-in-Chief, was replaced by Cavallero. After an interval the Italian air raids began again, and again there were bombs on Prevesa, Corinth, Volo, Larissa, and Herakleion (Candia) in Crete. Early in February the Zog line, built before the Italian occupation of Albania but much fortified by Italy, was penetrated. In torrential rain fighting continued. Before then Greece had suffered loss by the death of her Prime Minister.

Metaxas, whose authoritarian convictions and methods had before the war earned him the hatred of liberal opinion, was in this crisis sincerely regretted. He had throughout the time of tension before the Italian assault remained calm and firm; and in the three months since the outbreak of war during which he had led his country not only as Prime Minister, but as controller of the general direction of operations, he had come to stand for the success as well as the strength of Greek resistance. Opposition, which before the invasion had persisted beneath the smooth surface of dictatorship, had been changed into collaboration. The Venizelist officers of the Army and the Navy who had been retired after the revolt of March, 1935, were back in the service of their country, and unity between the parties, so long desired, was achieved in the face of danger. There was no question of the willingness of the people to fight; no other course but resistance would have been tolerated by the Greeks, and the Prime Minister in contemptuously rejecting the Italian ultimatum had done no more than speak for every man.

For Metaxas himself the end came, perhaps, generously. The reputation of Greece had never in modern times

stood higher, and he died without seeing the disasters which were ahead. He left the work of war to be carried on by Alexander Korizis, his first Minister of Public Welfare. There was no hesitation among the Greeks; they would, said an Athens newspaper, "individually and collectively rather die than come under the yoke of Mussolini and his gang".

In Athens life went on in the heavy rhythm of war. The big hotels were pressed into service: one for General Headquarters, another for the use of British officers; outside Athens, in the pleasant, wealthy suburb of Kifissia, the hotels, normally so lively on summer nights with diners and dancers, were turned into hospitals. The restaurants and cafés closed early. How could people linger in restaurants or sit late at the café tables on the pavements when there were no lights to sit by? For the black-out was not done by halves. A Greek visiting England in the spring of 1941 insisted that the London black-out was gay by comparison; in Athens, he said, the buses showed scarcely a pin-point of light, and on a cloudy night you could not find your own front door. For the rest the city was strangely unaltered. In the poor quarters of Piraeus there was damage by air raids, but not in Athens, where, though there were many alerts, no bombs had been dropped. Food supplies, luckily, were fairly good. Bread and vegetables were plentiful. There was a shortage of sugar, fish was scarce, meat could be bought on one day a week only, but on that day it was not rationed. Since the export of goods was next to impossible, home-grown oranges and lemons were in surfeit. People awaited with some concern the approach of summer, when

to live indoors at night with shuttered windows is unsufferable. Hardships and inconveniences there were, of course, for the Athenian, though trifling by comparison with the sufferings of the peasants of the north. A people naturally hasty, individualistic, inclined to complaint and rebellion, by common consent held their peace. Anything was better than surrender to the Italians.

It was in this spirit that Greece faced the spring of 1941. In so small a country there was no place for non-participants: the whole nation was in the battle, the young men fighting, the old men tilling the soil, the women nursing. They were not ignorant of the dangers before them, and the Italian defeats could not obscure the enormous threat now taking shape on their northern frontier.

Towards the end of February, the German troops in Rumania having been reinforced, the occupation of Bulgaria was clearly imminent: the war of nerves against Greece and Yugoslavia was entering on its last phase. The Greeks did not falter. We know now that on February 8, the date of the British entry into Benghazi, a Note from the Greek Government was received by the British Government. It was, as Eden said later, "no cry for help. The Greeks have never cried to us for help." It stated merely that they were resolved to resist German aggression. "It told us that Greece had united her fate with ours and would fight until final victory. It asked us to consider what help we could give and the conditions in which we could give it." In short, as it afterwards appeared, the Greeks would welcome help from this country, but with or without it they meant to fight. With this certainty Eden and Dill set out on their mission to the

Balkans and the Middle East. They reached Athens, after visiting Cairo and Ankara, on March 2. A day earlier German troops began their march into Bulgaria.

The Greeks, even the humble and the simple among them, understood the nature of the resolve they were taking. Greece, they said, was deciding her fate for centuries to come; by her attitude at this moment of menace she was "earning for herself the right tomorrow to be more than little Greece". On March 8 an Athens newspaper printed an open letter by its editor, Vlachos, to Hitler,* publicly stating for the first time that there would be no yielding to German threats.

"Small or great, the free army of Greeks will stand in Thrace as it stood in Epirus. It will fight. It will die there, too. In Thrace it will await the return of that runner from Berlin who came five years ago and received the light of Olympia, and has changed it into a bonfire, to bring death and destruction to a country small in size but now made great, and which after teaching the world how to live, must now teach the world how to die."

But before the final infamy of the German invasion, Greece must sustain one more assault by Italy. On the Sunday after the publication of the Vlachos letter a violent attack was launched in Albania. It raged for a week; eight Italian divisions were said to have taken part, although the central front over which the main battle was fought was no more than twenty miles wide. The attack was laboriously prepared, and Cabinet Ministers and newspaper correspondents attended. It was known that Mussolini himself was at the front. Perhaps the Italians

* Cf. page 40.

had an idea of scoring a loud victory before Germany should take a hand in Greece. The attack in any case was a disastrous failure. The Italian losses were estimated at 25,000 out of a total of 120,000. By the end of the week the Greeks had driven the enemy back, often beyond the positions from which he had started.

It was time for Germany to intervene. On March 25, Greek Independence Day, Yugoslavia was betrayed by its Government into joining the Three-Power Pact. Two days later that Government was overthrown and succeeded by one resolved to resist the Axis. The heroic, calamitous story needs little re-telling. There was no hope of averting the German blow; there was only the duty of awaiting it with resolution. "The best omen", an Athens newspaper quoted, "is to defend your country." The Greeks were still determined to fight to the last. In Thrace and Macedonia, where the course of invasion might be expected to lie, the peasants were leaving their villages, while in the Athens cafés Greeks fraternised and sang with the British and Imperial soldiers who had by now begun to arrive in Greece; on the streets satirical songs about Mussolini and Ciano were sold. The Italians, hereditary enemies, were still hated far more than the Germans.

On April 6, 1941, Germany struck at Yugoslavia and Greece; the troops were crossing the frontier before the Note informing the Greek Government of the action intended was handed to Korizis. The Greeks fought desperately in the Struma valley and the frontier forts of Thrace; they fought when they were surrounded and outflanked, they fought long after hope was gone. It was in

vain; the Yugoslav forces, with no time to take up their proper positions of defence, were forced to withdraw, leaving the left flank of the Greek army in Macedonia exposed. The German divisions were thus able to come down the Vardar valley and occupy Salonika, cutting off the Greek troops in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace from the rest of the country; they were able to come down through the Monastir Gap to Florina, so successfuly guarded during the autumn campaign, and to threaten the Greek forces in Albania. The Greeks were compelled to retreat from hard-won Koritza, and the Imperial forces, holding a line north of the River Vistritza, the ancient Haliakmon, from Mount Olympus to the Pindus range, first withdrew south of the river, and then fell back on positions south of Thessaly, on the right being the historic pass of Thermopylae, scene of the Spartans' stand against the Persians over 2,400 years before.

With few airfields, with overwhelming odds in planes against them, bombed day after day and hour after hour, the Allied forces clearly could not hold out indefinitely; the changed situation in Egypt made the sending of reinforcements impossible; and in grief and despair Korizis committed suicide. Four days later came the news that the main body of the Greek army in Epirus, their long lines of communication cut by the German advance, without supplies of food or ammunition, had capitulated. They had fought heroically and triumphantly for six months against superior numbers and equipment; now, unable without mechanical transport to withdraw fast enough, they were surrounded, cut off from their allies, their retreat lost. The good fight was nearly over. The

King and his Government, with the new Prime Minister, Tsouderos, moved to Crete; the British and Imperial forces, fighting a magnificent rearguard action, an action which will not be forgotten in Greece or in the world, prepared to withdraw. To the many honourable actions of the Greek leaders must be added one more; from them came the suggestion that the joint cause would be best served by the evacuation of Greece.

On April 27 German troops entered Athens. By then the withdrawal of Imperial troops was under way. From the harbour of Nauplion in the Argolid, from Kalamata far in the south, from Megara on the Saronic Gulf, from the beaches of Rafina and Rafti in Attica, from Monemvasia, once a Papal stronghold, from the island of Kythera the men embarked. The Greeks, who had given them flowers when they came, still gave them flowers now that they were leaving. There were no reproaches, only an insistence that victory would yet be won. Holding to the last to their contempt for the Italians, the Greeks insisted that Mussolini's army was still, when surrender in Epirus could no longer be avoided, being held in Albania. It was not to the Italians that Greek soil was lost.

CHAPTER IV

THE BATTLE CONTINUES

As the Nazis move in a curtain falls on country and people: a curtain of darkness through which the curious may yet make out the movements of defiance and heroism. Of Greece under occupation we had for long a fragmentary picture, pieced together with hints, rumours and such facts as the conqueror might think salutary. Time was to pass before travellers came from behind the curtain to tell their black stories, and even now we can know only a fraction of the truth.

Almost immediately the attention of the world was to be diverted from the Greek mainland. On May 20, 1941, less than three weeks after the completion of the evacuation of the British and Imperial forces, Crete was attacked by German parachutists and airborne troops. The defenders fought against overwhelming odds in the air, and two days later came the news that the few remaining R.A.F. fighter planes, their airfields useless, were being withdrawn. British, New Zealand, Australian and Greek troops, many of them only just arrived from the mainland, fought for ten more days, and beside them, seizing what arms they might, fought the men of Crete. Time and again they counter-attacked and drove off the invaders who swarmed from the gliders. The British Mediterranean Fleet utterly destroyed an Italian invasion fleet and to the last held

off a seaborne landing. But air cover and support were lacking. The German bridgehead at Maleme, most westerly airfield of the island, was established and extended; fighting savagely, the defenders saw their hopes of holding Crete dwindle and disappear. Canea had to be relinquished, Herakleion too; at Rethymno the Australians and Greeks by mischance never received the order to withdraw, and held out to the last. Once more the story of a desperate rearguard action, and exhausted men waiting through daylight for the rescuing ships to come at nightfall. The survivors of the Imperial and British troops, some sixteen thousand of them, were evacuated from Sphakia, south across the island from Souda Bay. Among the passengers carried by the British Navy was King George of the Hellenes. He had narrowly escaped capture in a parachutist attack on Herakleion, and now, with his Prime Minister, after many dangers, reached Egypt on May 25.

To the onlooker the Cretan campaign seemed at the time a tragedy unrelieved except by the heroism with which it had been fought. Details were to seep out gradually, stories of terror, stories of incomparable courage: the terror by day and night of the flights of troop-carriers, landing, crashing in flames, "throwing off sparks of helplessly blazing parachutists as they came down"; * the legendary courage of the Cretans, fighting unarmed against dive-bombers and machine-guns, or the story of the Greek Red Cross nurse, Joanna Stavridi, who, a solitary woman, after the deliberate destruction by bombing of the hospital at Maleme spent the last week nursing the wounded in caves by the sea.

* "The Campaign in Greece and Crete." Issued for the War Office by the Ministry of Information. London, H. M. Stationery Office. 1942.

But it was long before the world understood what a price the Germans had been made to pay for their victory: what an immediate price in crack troops and aircraft; what a persisting price in delay and frustration to more grandiose schemes. As the summer of 1941 advanced the Axis plans showed an unwonted tendency to go off at half-cock or not to go off at all. Simultaneously with the Cretan battle, in Iraq the rebel Government made an amateurish attempt to eject the British; the attempt petered out, almost to the perplexity of an audience still accustomed to the excellence of Axis team-work. Syria was occupied by Allied forces, and none but the Vichy French opposed them. And, on June 22, the gigantic Nazi blunder: the invasion of Russia, an invasion which, whatever its successes, in the end could mean only one thing, the destruction of the invaders.

It is easy to see now how valuable was the contribution of the campaign in Yugoslavia, Greece and Crete to the Allied cause; how a diversion of forces and an expense of time which had never entered into Hitler's calculations helped to throw out the elaborate mechanism of the eastward drive. It was not easy in the first days of June, when the Greeks of the mainland, when the Cretans who had never given up faith in the strength of their own bare hands, saw the last fragment of Greece enslaved. The story, it seemed, was over. There had been a good fight, but without avail. The world averted its eyes from the curtain of darkness and looked towards the smoke and the flames of the Russian campaign.

Yet there was melodrama enough being played out on Greek soil. For the Greeks themselves the bitterest humiliation came, not in the fact of defeat, but in its sequel. To be

beaten by the German Army was, for a nation of seven million people, no disgrace. The Nazis had done their best to keep Greek sympathies; even Hitler was not unconciliatory. But now the people who had defeated the Italians were to find themselves handed over to an Italian Army of Occupation; Italians moved through the country in the wake of the German conquerors, Italian garrisons took up their quarters in towns and villages. The sense of betrayal was intolerable. And there was other and worse treachery. Belatedly news came from Greece that Bulgaria, who had given the German troops passage for their attack on both Greece and Yugoslavia, had been rewarded with her share of plunder. On the heels of the Nazis, Bulgarian troops had marched into Greek Thrace and Eastern Macedonia, and Greeks in thousands were being driven out to make room for Bulgarian settlers.

The confused nervous summer of 1941 went by, overshadowed by the struggle on the Russian front; gradually it became possible to trace, however uncertainly, the course of affairs in Greece. The areas of occupation resolved themselves, it seemed, as follows. The Italians were theoretically in control of all Greece: on June 10, anniversary of the Fascist entry into the war, Mussolini had announced that Italy would occupy the whole country. In practice the Germans held the key points: the airfields, a few ports, some of the islands. Piraeus, for instance, was in German hands, and though Athens itself was held by the Italians the surrounding airfields were German. Salonika, again, with a considerable stretch of Macedonia, extending on the east to the River Struma, was German-controlled. The Bulgarians held Eastern Macedonia and Western Thrace, that

is to say the area bounded by the Bulgarian frontier on the north, the Aegean on the south and the Struma on the west. On the east the Bulgarian squatters had staked their claim almost as far as the Turkish frontier: almost, but not quite, for the Hebrus province, a strip of territory on the frontier, was kept in German hands. The islands of Thasos and Samothrace also were Bulgarian-controlled; Lemnos, Mytilene (Lesbos) and Chios, close to the Turkish coast, German-controlled; the Italians were allowed to add to their long usurpation of the Dodecanese control over Chios, Icaria and the rest of the islands of the Aegean. They held, of course, the Ionian Islands, Corfu, Leukas, Kephallenia and Zakynthos, and now and then talked of annexation, as they talked also of annexing to Albania a slice of Epirus as far south as Preveza. In Crete they were given an area of control in the east; the rest of the island went to the Germans, who busied themselves with the extension of airfields and fortifications.

In Athens itself, immediately after the German entry, a puppet Government had been set up, with Tsolakoglou, the General concerned in the capitulation of the Greek Army in Epirus, as Prime Minister. His name was scarcely known in Greece. The rest of the puppet Government, too, was made up of nonentities; no political leader of any standing would lend his name. The King and the Tsouderos Government went into exile. In September 1941 they were to reach London and make it for the time being their headquarters. There the main business of deliberations with the United Nations was to be carried on; there were, however, visits later to the United States as well as to the Middle East.

The future of Greece, in the summer and autumn of

that year, looked bleak enough. As the Germans took hold of the country, hunger and chaos shadowed them. The atrocious story of Western Europe was repeated: looting, requisitioning, the utter subordination of human life to the needs of the conqueror. To those who knew Greece, knew the friendly inquisitive towns, the villages where life moved so delicately between want and enough, the peasants patiently wrestling with a land beautiful but niggardly, the methods of the invader seemed even more odious than before. To thieve from a people with no margin of plenty —the first weeks of Nazi occupation on the mainland at least may have been innocent of the violence which marked their entry elsewhere, but robbery can never have been more blatant. In Athens the shops were stripped bare. With their worthless occupation marks the German troops bought up everything in sight; a van fitted with a printing press was always ready to turn out more paper money, and the story goes that one German officer, bringing off a deal, asked the other party to wait for payment till the notes were dry. Houses were looted by the troops billetted in them, cars were confiscated, food was callously sent out of the country.

Robbery on an ambitious scale went on in the world of commerce. Industrial concerns were forced to sell a controlling interest to the Germans; if an owner refused, ways could be found of changing his mind. Factories, mines, shipping, business firms came inexorably under German or more rarely Italian control; all the resources of the country, insufficient as they were even for Greek needs, must be directed into German hands. Meanwhile the transport system, left in chaos by the April campaign, was reserved for the use of the occupation forces. Civilians could not

travel from one district to another except with a permit from the Axis authorities, and even then they might have to wait four or five days for a place. Trains, running, after the demolitions of the period of evacuation, erratically and with strange hiatuses in their journeys, carried little but military personnel and equipment. The country, already hacked in pieces by the three occupying forces, was thus further split into regions severely isolated; the north knew only by rumors the sufferings of the south, Arta became to Athens as remote as a foreign province.

Here and there in the mountainous districts or even in the towns British and Imperial soldiers were still, in the first months, lying in hiding: stragglers, units cut off or left behind by urgent retreat. Incomparably magnanimous, the Greeks protected, fed and sheltered them; from the poorest mountain village to the streets of Athens there were always men and women ready to risk their lives for these lost fighters. Stories tell of British soldiers hidden in houses where German officers were billetted, of Englishmen dressed in Greek clothes and provided with Greek ration cards. Some, after a long run of liberty, were captured; some escaped to tell the tale. These, we know will not forget their debt to the Greeks.

Thus from the beginning the Greeks refused to submit. There must have been moments of bewilderment, when the ferocity of their physical enslavement, joined with their isolation from the outside world, gave them to wonder if they were indeed abandoned. In the bearing of the people towards the invaders there was no indecision, only an immovable resolve to resist.

Only too soon it was made clear what kind of forces

were drawn up against them. For many months, I have said, the abyss between Greece and the free world seemed unbridgeable. While from the rest of occupied Europe there was a regular flow of news, from Greece came almost nothing but the harsh reiteration of despoilment. It was not until the first autumn that the picture behind the curtain began to take on a shape individual as well as definite.

In October 1941 news came of something more than robbery in Greece: news of massacre. The news was, by this time, past history. In June the Germans in Crete, still uncertain of their latest conquest, had given the island a demonstration of terror, a warning against the crime of taking arms in defence of homes and villages. What had happened was, briefly and coldly, this. The Germans had taken three villages and burned them to the ground. People flying for safety had been murdered. Mass executions had been carried out, the victims being forced, in the standard Nazi fashion, to dig their common grave before they died. Five hundred and six people had been executed in Canea, a hundred and thirty in Rethymno, in Herakleion fifty. Some had been tortured; and among the dead were a priest, an abbot and the monks of his monastery.

The reply of the Cretans was to resist and again resist; the mountains of the island became the stronghold of untamable guerillas. And now came news of terror from the mainland of Greece, from Bulgarian-occupied Macedonia. At the end of September there was a rising in the Drama-Kavalla district. The reason for a revolt at that particular moment remains obscure, but there was no doubt about its result. The insurgents were subdued by machine-gunning, shelling and bombing. In five towns and eight

villages there were massacres. Three thousand eight hundred people are believed to have died in one town, over two thousand in another.* Towns and villages were destroyed by bombing: utterly erased as, nine months later, the Czech village of Lidice was to be erased. The difference is that the destruction of Doxatos, to give one name, took place as it were behind drawn curtains. It was not until later that the story was made known, and even then the obscurity which covered the face of Greece lifted only partly, so that there was no shock of horror such as followed the end of Lidice. But the Greeks will not forget their murdered villages. We, too, should do well to remember them as we remember Lidice.

The tale of murder begun by the Bulgarian occupying troops was taken up by the German forces in the north. Presently, on the pretext of restoring order, they surrounded the village of Mesavouni; the women and children were set apart, then the rest of the population, every single soul, was put to death; the village itself was rased to the ground. Stavros in Chalcidice, which the Germans accused of sheltering terrorists, met the same end; one hundred and fifty Greeks perished with their village.

Nazi brutality has by now no surprises for us. Less has been heard of the behaviour of Bulgaria, a satellite Power whose treachery, more even than the cynicism of Germany, has enraged the Greeks. Treachery and callousness: for the Bulgarian occupation of Western Thrace and Eastern Macedonia, richest provinces of Greece, has been marked by a cold cruelty unsurpassed even in this age of pogroms. By Bulgaria, indeed, it was regarded as, not an occupation, but an annexation, the Government of Boris

* Greek White Paper on Axis Crimes in Greece.

insisting that the Aegean provinces, as they called their winnings, were now restored to their own rightful country. The fact that the population was Greek was ignored, and an abominable process of "Bulgarisation" began. Greek civil authorities replaced by Bulgarian, Greek schools closed and Bulgarian opened, the Bulgarian language made obligatory even in the churches, above all the expulsion of clergy, teachers, doctors, lawyers—nothing was left undone to root out Greek culture and Greek traditions. Sometimes the people of a whole district would be driven out; thousands of their own accord fled to provinces still, in name at least, Greek. Those who remained were exposed to robbery, violence, terrorism of the most odious kind; while an attempt was made at Bulgarian colonisation of the whole region. As a start a thousand Bulgarian families were to be settled there; they would be given transport, implements, long-term loans and other privileges. A grandiose scheme for a complete substitution of population was, in fact, under way; for a Greek the only hope was to accept Bulgarian nationality. The Greeks never gave in to this national blackmail. After two years of "Bulgarisation" the usurpers had wrung from the people nothing but hatred: hatred and resistance. The answer to blackmail was the guerilla movement.

In the autumn of 1941 one major problem was to obsess the Greeks: the problem of keeping alive. At the best of times Greece must import wheat, a third, perhaps, of her total needs. Now the shattered landscape, so bitterly fought over, yielded only a part of its former crops. There was no transport, in this battlefield of a country, to spare for the relief of its people; that was reserved for the conquerors.

Islands were cut off from mainland, and only a rare caïque, perhaps in the service of the Germans or the Italians, served to link their lonely life with the life of the body of Greece. No trains ran to bear corn to oil-growing districts, oil to the areas which produced tobacco. From the outside world, nothing. Worse than nothing; from Greece to the outside world went loot: olive oil, raisins, tobacco, vegetables, fruit, corn even: loot for Germany and Italy and Bulgaria, but first and foremost for Germany. Meanwhile the occupation forces lived on the country. Huge occupation expenses were wrung from the helpless population. The Nazis requisitioned what they needed and paid for it at prices fixed arbitrarily low. The whole economy of the land might be thrown into disorder: the Herrenvolk would still be fed. The Greeks could starve.

The story of the famine in Greece in the winter of 1941-2 is familiar: familiar, but still dreadful. Suddenly the onlooker began to realise that conquest and massacre were only the beginning; now came the long trial by hunger. The British blockade of Europe aimed, logically enough, at preventing supplies of food as well as war materials from reaching occupied territory and falling into German hands; the sea-channels were closed. The responsibility of seeing to it that the conquered peoples were fed, clearly fell to the occupying Powers. It soon became only too obvious that Germany intended to ignore that responsibility. She could at least have changed her policy of living on the country, leaving to the Greeks what food their fields had to offer. With a strange mixture of cynicism and blindness she chose to pursue it: cynicism, because she made at that time little pretence of regard for the misery of the people;

blindness, because she never saw the strength of the hatred which grew in their hearts.

And so, throughout that winter of cold and defeat, the Greeks starved. Everywhere in Greece the people were hungry; in country districts, where they had always been more or less self-sufficient, less hungry, perhaps, than in the towns, but still, with the constant requisitionings which took from them their infinitesimal margin above want, hungry. In the islands, dependent for many of their supplies on traffic with the mainland, in Athens and Piraeus, victualled wholly from without, there was famine. Famine such that sometimes there was for days on end no bread at all to be had. Oil had in any case entirely disappeared from the shops. Bread and oil, the staple foods of the poor —now only the very rich could afford them. For as food grew scarce and at last almost vanished from the open market, the black market swelled and flourished. There it was possible to buy bread—at a price; in the spring of 1942, for instance, a three-pound loaf cost 2,500 drachmae, over £4 at the pre-war rate of exchange.

People of moderate incomes sold their furniture, their clothes, everything they had to buy food. The poor had nothing to sell; for them there was nothing to do but die. And they died; in hundreds, in thousands through the winter they died. They fainted in the streets for want of food and died where they lay; carts dragged through the streets carrying the bodies to huddle a hundred in a common grave. The weak, old people and children, died most readily; as for the babies, by the spring of 1942 there were few poor women with the strength for child-bearing. The tougher among the people wrestled with death. They

searched for scraps of food among the heaps of refuse which, since the municipal services were partly at a standstill, stood in the streets; boys fought over an olive-stone or a bit of orange-peel. To their sufferings was added, since fuel too was almost unobtainable, the misery of cold. In the hospitals, those which had not been reserved for the Germans, children lay dying of malnutrition. Milk had long since vanished from Athens, and doctors and nurses were helpless to save them.

The Greeks had little to distract them from the spectacle of their own wretchedness. The entry of the United States into the war, though it must have given them vast encouragement, was followed by a series of setbacks and disasters to both America and Britain. At home, beside the spectre of starvation went the bogey of inflation. Prices rose to incredible heights. Not food only, but every commodity was out of reach. A man's suit in April 1942 cost perhaps £150, a pair of shoes £30. The newspapers printed curious and pathetic advertisements; socks and stockings would be offered in exchange for food, oil, beans and a sum of money for a bicycle. In their restaurants the Nazis ate and drank. There was no love lost between them and the Italians, to whom they made little secret of their contempt. The officers of the two occupying forces in Athens frequented separate restaurants and cafés; when they met there was always danger of high words or even a scuffle. The Italians, of course, would come off worst. To the Greeks, humiliated as they had been by the Italian occupation, there must have been some satisfaction in seeing them perpetually discomfited in the struggle to hold their own against the Nazis. But the Greeks found their anger against Mussolini's Fas-

cists overlaid, now, by a far more savage emotion. This time they saw the Nazis as they really were; many even who had at one time been pro-German. From the bottom of their hearts the Greeks loathed the German conquerors. And in loathing the spirit of resistance grew.

The picture so far presented may seem to be of a country resistant but passive; of a people suffering, hating but helpless. How far that would be from the truth, time was to show. The Greeks had lived through a winter which would have broken the spirit of a less resilient race. They had endured it almost in isolation. Over the air, indeed, there came the assurance that they were not forgotten; but except in Athens radio receiving sets had been confiscated, and broadcasts from Allied stations were listened to at grave risk. Even in Athens there was the difficulty of shortage of electricity. Current was rationed, for many hours of the day it was cut off altogether. For the rest, the people were left to the lying voice of German and Italian propaganda and their own Nazi-controlled Athens station. Inveterate readers of newspapers, they scarcely looked nowadays at a press bound and gagged by German and Italian censorship. For in spite of everything they were undefeated. At the end of the winter they were not an inch nearer submission. On the contrary. In April the Athens correspondent of a German paper could say nothing better than this: "They have only one aim, to undermine the foundations of the New Order in Greece, and it must be clearly stated that Greece is not working." Then the note of threat: "Is it worth while to go on being ceremonious with the Greek people?"

From the spring of 1942 the resistance of Greece to the

usurpers grew steadily stronger. Or perhaps it merely seems so to us, who for the first year of the occupation saw the country through so thick a curtain; perhaps there was no change in the degree of resistance, merely in the volume of news which reached us. We can in any case know only a fraction of what went on in Greece in that year of resistance. Here and there a fact emerges: a strike, a bridge blown up, a sudden guerilla raid. But for every guerilla feat we hear of, a score go uncelebrated; the act of sabotage is a moment only in a ceaseless fight. If the single act is cited, it must stand for a chain of audacities; behind the moment of violence, the whole background of a people's battle.

From the beginning of occupation, no doubt, there was active resistance in the mountainous districts. For those in towns and cities, living under the eye of the German and Italian military, to organize was more difficult. We know that on the great national days—on March 25, Independence Day, on October 28, anniversary of the Italian invasion and a day of pride for the Greeks who defeated it—the people of Athens and Piraeus made their demonstrations. In these the students, girls as well as boys, took a prominent part, marching through the streets with flags in defiance of the Carabinieri; and now and again stories would come of student unrest and the closing of Universities. Organised action by the workers was another matter. In April 1942 came the first of the strikes in Athens and Piraeus, with at the same time a strike in Salonika. Civil Servants and municipal employees joined in demanding of the Government an increase in salaries to meet the new cost of living, or at least food enough to subsist. Five

months later the Civil Servants and municipal workers, railwaymen, tramway workers, factory workers of Athens and Piraeus struck once more, again for an improvement in their conditions of life; the strike lasted six days and was on a scale sharply disquieting to the occupation authorities. Each time the puppet Government of Tsolakoglou was forced to make concessions. The leaders of the strike, indeed, did not escape scot-free; there were arrests and, in September, shooting; but the victory was with the strikers. The Greeks had shown that they could still beat the arguments of force and starvation.

That spring and summer Greece began to receive concrete evidence that she was not forgotten by her Allies. Many people in Britain as well as in America had felt for some time that, however strong the arguments in favour of the blockade, there were arguments even stronger in favour of lifting it for the benefit of the Greeks; better to risk the possibility of food falling into the hands of the enemy rather than abandon our friends to famine. Small and rare cargoes of foodstuffs had reached Greece from Turkey in the winter of famine to serve the Athens soup-kitchens: small because of the scarcity of surplus supplies in Turkey, rare because of the difficulty of finding tonnage. The ship at first available, after making a few trips, was lost in a storm; with British help she was replaced, but her cargo was gone. In March for the first time the efforts of the exiled Greek Government to enlist official sympathy were successful, and a cargo of wheat, for which they themselves paid, was allowed to sail for Piraeus. This first relief ship was followed by others, (among them an American-supplied ship); the British Government played their

part in finding the tonnage and paying for the charter, the Greek Government paid for the cargoes.

But the visits were still rare and the quantites tiny in comparison with the needs of the population. Finally in the autumn of 1942 a plan came into operation by which fifteen thousand tons of wheat a month, the gift of the Canadian Government, were shipped to Greece and distributed under neutral control, the Swedes giving their good offices in negotiation with the occupation authorities and general execution. It is not necessary here to go into the later developments of the plan by which pulse and milk were added to the cargoes and distribution was extended to cover, as far as possible, the islands and the provinces. What concerns us is the fact that help was being sent to Greece. When the second winter of occupation came the people no longer felt that they were being left by their Allies to starve.

The improvement in food conditions took time to make itself felt. The summer of 1942 was still a summer of fantastic high prices, of hunger, want and the sorry manoeuvres of the black market—in which German and Italian officials brazenly took part. Even the natural abundance of the summer was killed; the fruit and vegetables which at least might have fed the Athenians were requisitioned and flown across the Mediterranean to Rommel's men in Egypt and Libya. Medical supplies had almost disappeared, and there were fears of an epidemic of typhus. The puppet Government made its shadowy gestures of control; the people, seeing in them the instruments of German and Italian policy, ignored or despised them.

Not a few Greeks were passing out of their jurisdiction.

A stream of refugees was reaching the Middle East: families who could no longer tolerate the miseries of life under enemy domination, men who had made up their minds to continue the fight outside Greece. Among the arrivals in the Middle East was Canellopoulos, a young politician, exiled under the Metaxas régime, who had fought in Albania and now escaped; he was to become for a time Vice-premier in the Greek Government abroad. Others joined the Army, the Air Force, the Navy. At the time of the collapse the Greek Navy had escaped capture and with much of its strength had come to serve beside the British Fleet; during the next two years it was to be fortified by the addition of several destroyers and other units, given by Great Britain. The Army and the Air Force were in a different case. The Air Force had been tiny, and at the most a few individual fliers had got away. There had been no possibility of evacuating the Greek Army, except for, again, an infinitesimal number; the body of soldiers and officers who had defeated the Italians were left, disbanded, to struggle home with their frostbitten hands and feet, their wounds and their sense of intolerable betrayal.

The prospect of a Greek Army serving in concert with the Allies seemed negligible. Yet eighteen months after the evacuation of the Greek mainland a Greek Brigade was fighting with distinction at the Battle of El Alamein and a Greek Division was being formed, and a Greek fighter squadron had for some time been patrolling the desert beside the British. Meanwhile the Greek Navy had done excellent service, winning praise from the British Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean; the exploits of the submarine Papanikolis, among other units, were spoken of

with pride by the Greeks. The Greek merchant navy still sailed the seas. By recruitment from inside and outside Greece, but most astonishingly from inside, from the men who escaped to take up arms, the services had been built up until the Greeks, fighting in their own fashion under occupation, could once more feel they had an Army and an Air Force as well as a Navy and a Merchant Marine against the day of liberation.

Fighting in their own fashion—there were many ways in which the battle was carried on inside Greece. Not all were bloodless. Early in June 1942 for the first time news came from Athens of the arrest and execution of hostages, in reprisal, in the traditional Nazi way, for sabotage of railway lines. A week or so later there were reprisals on a far larger scale. There had been sabotage in Crete. Savagely the Germans took sixty-two citizens of Herakleion and shot then. Many prominent Cretans were among them: a former Mayor of Herakleion, the editor of a local newspaper, people known and honoured. In other parts of the island too there were executions, the taking of hostages and the destruction of houses. One schoolmaster died singing the Greek national anthem; he had, he said, spent his life teaching it to the children, now he would sing it himself.

The shooting of hostages was to become a regular feature of the Nazi-Fascist tyranny in Greece. In the winter of 1942-3 it was directed against the guerilla movement, by then increasing in volume and strength. The first resounding episode in which the guerillas were concerned was the blowing up in November of the Gorgopotamos bridge in the wild country of Central Greece, a vital railway

bridge on the main Athens-Salonika line. From that time they operated in steadily widening areas of the north and centre; as winter turned to spring the Italian hold on the mountain districts grew more precarious, and garrisons kept nervously to their strong-points. Stories of guerilla raids multiplied, and with them stories of sabotage in ships, harbours, dockyards. Meanwhile the tale of executions lengthened.

The Greek resistance did not falter. The press was controlled; but secretly an underground press was born, a score of leaflets spreading the truth about the war outside and inside Greece. The Germans called for workers to go to Germany; in spite of the blackmail of starvation and the bribe of high wages, only a very few responded; the rest, hungry and wretched as they were, refused to help the German war machine. Contemptuously the people watched the vacillations of their puppet Government under Nazi or Fascist pressure, contemptuously saw one shadowy Premier succeeded by another. Their hopes were fastened elsewhere: on the swelling strength of the Allied forces, on the British victory in Libya and Tripolitania, on the Allied landing in North Africa, on the Russian battle. And as they hoped they fought on, all classes, all professions together: students, Civil Servants, journalists, workers, doctors, guerillas, peasants, the Church, the law, all fighting in the common battle.

When the curtain fell on Greece in the spring of 1941 it seemed to many the end of the story. Two years later we can see through the curtain well enough to know there was no ending. The story of courage and resistance was just beginning.

CHAPTER V

THE CAPITAL

THESE people, then, the Greeks of mountain and island, village and town, fought and still fight with us. They were the first of the peoples of Europe to show that the armies of the Axis were resistible; the importance, psychological as well as strategic, of their successes in the autumn of 1940 must not be forgotten, even though the Albanian campaign seems now only an incident in a larger campaign, even though today Greece has been overrun from north to south. Great Britain and America will not forget Greece's part in the war: we are, one might say, under oath to remember. Yet the country remains strange; her people are, to all but a fraction of Western Europeans, an unknown people. From the opposite end of Europe their battle was apt to resolve itself into a series of newspaper correspondents' phrases. Operations resumed, we muttered in the days of the Albanian struggle; strong pressure exercised; violent counter-attacks; artillery activity. The country over which the Greeks fought later took on the same almost abstract shapes: Olympus area, Lamia line, foothills of the plain of northern Attica. Chalkis bombed, the Englishman read: and scarcely knew if he was reading of a port on the scale of Southampton or a country town, bustling and preoccupied in the Aylesbury manner.

Greece is a country roughly the size of England without Wales: a country of high, barren mountains, sparse vegetation, and niggardly rivers. The brilliance of the light, the clarity of the air, and the serene classical lines of hill and plain give the landscape a beauty at once remote and dramatic: the beauty of a landscape which not dwarfs merely but is essentially untouched by the habitation of men. The people know and understand the indifference of Nature; something of their mingled tenacity and resignation springs from this realisation. Greece is cut almost in two by the Gulf of Corinth. Northern or Continental Greece extends from Macedonia to Attica and the north shores of the Gulf; through it, from north to south, runs the Pindus range, a huge, craggy backbone. The Morea or Peloponnese, the peninsula which forms the southern part of Greece, is connected with the rest of the mainland only by the tiny Isthmus of Corinth, itself slit by the Corinth Canal. The Morea is in effect a vast island, rising from coastal plains to the great mountain ranges of Arcadia at its centre. On the north-west Greece is bounded by Albania; on the north by Yugoslavia and Bulgaria; on the north-east by Turkey. For the rest, there is the sea. On the west, the Ionian Sea; on the east, the Aegean—seas blue and smiling at midsummer, but apt in winter and spring, indeed on many summer days, to fly into a passion of wind and waves.

Everywhere Greece reaches out into her seas with islands: the Ionian Islands, Corfu, Leukas, Ithaca, Kephallenia, Zakynthos; the great southerly island of Crete; Euboea and the northern Sporades; the Cyclades and the easterly islands scattered over the Aegean all the way from Attica

to the coast of Asia Minor on the other side. Any map shows, baldly, what Byron meant by the Isles of Greece. Fully to understand the phrase you must fly from Italy to Greece. The passenger plane which before the war used to take off from Brindisi left behind it the solid, regular Italian coast and crossed to a fantastically broken, indented coast. Large islands, small islands, islands with woods and fields and men at work threshing the corn, islands which are no more than tiny outcroppings of rock in a circle of white surf; gulfs, bays, inlets, and more islands. Land and sea are interlocked in Greece; everywhere the sea probes the land with huge fingers, everywhere the land flings up a starfish island; walking in the mountains of the very heart of the country, you are never long out of sight of the Mediterranean. The British like to think of themselves as a seafaring people whose lives are ruled by the influence of the Atlantic. The Greeks, too, may call themselves an island people; and, equally with the harsh demands of a rocky and mountainous soil, the calms and storms of the Aegean and the Ionian Seas have shaped their history.

A country the size of England, with a seventh of Great Britain's population. On the difficult soil of Greece (less than one-fifth is cultivated and fertile) more than seven million people are supported; the population in 1938 was estimated at 7,107,000, and it was increasing at the rate of over 80,000 a year. The majority of the people work on the land. There are few large towns. The population is thickest in the ports: in Salonika, with a quarter of a million inhabitants; in Patras, Volo, Kavalla; and, of course, in Athens and its port, the Piraeus. To

Piraeus come sooner or later all the sailors of the Greek archipelago.

"Have you been to Athens?" you ask some peasant or fisherman.

"To Athens, no; I went once to Piraeus."

"Did you like it?"

"Eh, so-so. All noise and fuss it is. And the wine was not good, not pure. Here in our village we have good wine, we put nothing in it: you must try it."

Of the approaches to Greece, that by Piraeus is the most dramatic. Travel by air makes the transition from one civilisation to another too abrupt; there is no time to see how the villages change from Macedonian to Greek, how the faces of the men and women working in the fields begin to wear a welcoming look, how the lines of the landscape lengthen and flow. The journey to Greece by rail used to give time indeed: the Simplon-Orient flying, in the days which seem so long ago, south-east across Yugoslavia, over the frontier at Ghevgheli, south from Salonika and across the plain of Thessaly, then tunnelling and twisting through great mountain ranges to Athens. But from the railway there is no sudden view of Athens. The train comes pounding over the dry Athenian plain, past whitewashed shacks and straggling streets, to slide into the Larissa station. But the approach by sea shows the land spread out in a huge panorama. First, the leisurely voyage along the Gulf of Corinth—I speak of a time when the Italian Lloyd boats still plied between Trieste, Venice, Brindisi, Piraeus and Constantinople. Then the ship nosing cautiously through the Canal, nearly four miles of it, and under the single bridge

which connects North and South Greece; the Canal is narrow, and with a large ship there is much dangling of immense balls of rope and letting down of rope rafts lest she should graze her flanks against the tall, steep sides. Last, the passage from the Isthmus and up the Saronic Gulf, with the big ragged island of Salamis on the left and Aegina on the right, to Piraeus; and there round you is the bustle of a Mediterranean port—the coalers and tankers and tugs, the cargo-boats from Western Europe and America, the smart European passenger ships; farther off, the small coasting and island steamers; and, anchored together under a forest of naked masts and rigging, the caïques—sailing boats, traders of the Aegean and the Ionian Seas.

Piraeus is a large town now with over a quarter of a million inhabitants of its own. Beyond it a broad motor road leads to Athens, six miles away; as the ship comes to anchor you can see, far off and golden, the Acropolis and the Parthenon. Athens sprawls at the foot of the Acropolis and spreads over the plain. From the harbour the city is a vast expanse of white, close-packed houses, with here and there an isolated hill—a patch of dark green to the right where Ardettos overlooks the Stadium; farther inland the sharp peak of Lykabettos rising from the houses; close by the fortress-rock of the Acropolis, though not distinguishable from the sea, are two other historic hills, the Areopagus and the Pnyx. Beyond, Athens has reached the slopes of the three mountains which guard her: on the right, the bare ridge of Hymettos; on the left, wooded Parnes; between them, Pentelikon, scarred by marble quarries. The three mountains

shut in the plain of Athens, and the city sees only hills. From the Acropolis, from occasional roof-tops, the Athenians may look also at the sea; it is not visible from the streets.

Athens has changed since I first saw it fifteen years ago. Greece is the richest of the Balkan countries; of her people, two million, it is said, have a standard of urban comfort not far below that of Western Europe. To the spectator the comfort may sometimes seem disturbingly near privation. Athens, however, has always since I have known it been a city with the air of a capital, gay, easy, prosperous-looking. But in 1926 the transformation from a nineteenth-century Balkan town to a modern European city was still in progress. Occasional horse-cabs still shambled through the streets, the horses wearing a necklace of blue beads against the evil eye, and taxis were still not a matter of course. There were few and poor buses; the centre of Athens was served, as much of it still is, by trams. The streets and pavements, except in the middle of the city, were full of pot-holes. There was no adequate water supply, and the best drinking-water was sold by the jar, brought in carts from springs outside Athens.

Within a few years all that was changed: the streets full of taxis with cheerful, squawking horns, roads and pavements to a great extent mended, smart new buses flashing through Athens and out to the suburbs, traffic lights even. The very technique of arrival altered. In 1926 passenger boats, including the big Italian Lloyds, did not moor close to the quayside. They cast anchor a little way out, and waited for their passengers to be taken

off in rowing-boats; the boatmen, tyrants of Piraeus, howled, swore, and frightened genteel visitors from Western Europe out of their wits. Later the visitor walked with dignity down the gangway to the quay, and took a cheap taxi to the city; on his way he paid a small toll for the use of the fine new road.

In many ways Athens in 1926 seemed an alien city, even to one approaching it with the most welcoming heart. What the foreigner expects from Athens it is not easy to say. A classical city, massive with temples, sprouting antique statuary as London sprouts lamp-posts? The Greek counterpart of Rome, equal in grandeur and wealth and number of monuments? Certainly not the tall, modern, white stucco houses of residential Athens; not the cheerful shops and crammed little stores of the shopping quarters; not the bustling, marketing air of the centre of the city with its hotels and clanking trams and cigarette kiosks and newspaper-sellers. The treasures are not obvious. The Acropolis, indeed, dominates Athens. But, the temples and theatres of the Acropolis apart, the architectural monuments of classical Athens are, for the unscholarly, not many or inescapable; and the great achievements of sculpture and vase-painting are confined within two museums: the National Museum, a neo-Greek building set a little way back from the tramlines of the Patissia Road, and the modest sunken building on the Acropolis itself. At first sight, then, a modern town: buses, taxis, private cars; conventional Mediterranean domestic architecture; banal public buildings—Ministries, Legations, banks, an ex-Palace, a University, an Academy, a House of Parliament; squares with cafés,

boulevards with trams, and a handsome expanse of public gardens.

But gradually as one walks about Athens the consciousness of the past grows stronger. The streets charmingly have the grand classical names: Sophocles Street, Pindar Street, Pheidias Street, Pericles Street; walking from the British School of Archaeology towards the middle of Athens, one crosses the streets of Aristomenes, Plutarch, Lucian and Herodotus. And gradually the Acropolis begins to dominate one's vision as it dominates the life of Athens. At the end of every street, it seems, there is the Acropolis; from the café, the shop, the square you lift your eyes, and there it is, superbly crowned by the strong, delicate columns of the Parthenon. The Attic landscape, too, takes every day more hold. It is not only that from the Acropolis itself the lovely panorama of hill and plain and sea is unfolded: a faint clamour rising from the city at your feet, and, beyond, the still, voiceless plain, the serene lines of the three guardian mountains, and to the west the sea, Aegina and Salamis. Even in the streets the landscape is present: Hymettus golden at midday, Hymettus rose-coloured at evening—there are times when the long spine of the mountain, six miles away, looks no farther off than the other side of the royal gardens.

The political life of Athens was uneasy in 1926. Pangalos, an estimable soldier no doubt, but an erratic ruler, had declared himself Dictator of Greece at the beginning of the year. His seizure of power six months earlier had been accomplished without bloodshed but was followed by some employment of a popular political weapon—exile to the islands. It has long been the practice among

Greek politicians when in supreme power to ensure the quiescence of their opponents by shipping them off to some island or other, preferably in the Aegean, where distance and the scarcity of communications make intrigue difficult. Most Greek Prime Ministers have been exiled once or twice at least: Venizelos and Metaxas among them went farther than to the islands. Pangalos himself was to be exiled later on; but for the moment he had the upper hand, and General Kondylis (the man chiefly responsible nine years later for the suppression of the Venizelist revolt and the restoration of the monarchy) was despatched to the volcanic island of Santorin, together with two Liberal ex-Premiers, Kaphandaris and Papanastasiou. Papanastasiou, whom I knew later as a solid, amiable, rather silent middle-aged man, was giving one of the fashionable large tea-parties at his house when an officer came to arrest him. Embarrassment was aggravated by the fact that among the guests were the wife of the President of the Republic, the wives of the British and Italian Ministers, and the Head of the French Military Mission; the officer was asked if he could call again next day. He agreed, and the tea-party continued. Differences of opinion, however, were not always so politely settled. In the House of Parliament some years later a deputy threw a chair at Papanastasiou, who put his shoulder out throwing it back.

In less than a year the tables were turned; Kondylis, free from his island, beamed at General Pangalos, dined with him, and then smartly executed a *coup d'état* and had him arrested. But throughout the spring the stranger to Athens was aware of a feeling of uncertainty. The

Europeanisation of the city proceeded sometimes by bizarre methods; that spring, for instance, Pangalos, prompted, it was said, by his wife, a lady built on the Wagnerian scale, issued an edict regulating the length of women's skirts. On the other hand, there was the success of the new British-trained police. Since 1918 a British Police Mission had been working in Greece; at first it was concerned with the improvement of the existing gendarmerie, but its intention was to introduce London police methods, and in 1921 a Police School was founded in Corfu. The urban police trained here took over in turn Corfu itself, Patras and Piraeus; in 1925, Athens. Suddenly at main-road crossings there appeared smart police on point duty. They stood on little stools, acquiring with the elevation, no doubt, an extra authority in a city where tall men are rare; and to the stolid, traditional stop-and-go gestures of the British policeman they added a touch of Greek extravagance. They beckoned and repelled in the style of an orchestral conductor; the traffic was tamed; everyone was delighted. The gendarmerie, however, in 1926 were given a share in the policing of the city. They retain it still, and a dual system of police and gendarmerie persists.

Meanwhile, Dictator or no Dictator, Athens and all Greece had a colossal problem to deal with, the settlement of the refugees; a problem which first confronted the Government in 1922 and was still occupying Greece years later. Here, briefly, are its origins.

In 1920 Greece was exhausted by three wars: the First and Second Balkan Wars and the Great War. But she was victorious, and she was the richer by both territory

and prestige. By the Treaty of Neuilly, November, 1919, which ended the war with Bulgaria, that country had given up Western Thrace—that is to say, her coastline on the Aegean, which ran from a point east of Kavalla to the River Maritsa, and which she had won from Turkey in 1913; she retained only the promise of certain economic outlets. In August, 1920, by the Treaty of Sèvres, this territory was ceded to Greece. As well, Turkey was to give Greece the rest of Thrace almost as far as the Chatalja line—that is, the coast from the River Maritsa almost to Constantinople; the islands of Imbros and Tenedos at the entrance to the Dardanelles; and sovereignty in effect over Smyrna and its hinterland; after five years a plebiscite was to be held to decide for or against the complete union of Smyrna with Greece.

The Treaty was never ratified, and three years later Greece had lost nearly all she had won. She had lost Smyrna; she had lost Imbros and Tenedos; she had lost all Eastern Thrace and even a tiny fragment of Western Thrace—Karagatch, a suburb of Adrianople on the western bank of the Maritsa. What was more, the Dodecanese was lost too. The Dodecanese, as has already been said, was occupied in 1912 by the Italians with many handsome promises, never fulfilled, of autonomy for the Greek population. By the Treaty of Sèvres Rhodes and the other islands of the Dodecanese were ceded by Turkey to Italy, and a Greco-Italian Convention signed the same day transferred them, with certain conditions, to Greece. But when Turkey defeated Greece Italy repudiated the agreement. By the Treaty of Lausanne Turkey "renounced in favour of Italy all her rights" to the

Dodecanese. It is not without point to remember also that this was the moment—this moment of grief and loss and defeat—seized by Italy to bombard unarmed Corfu.

The losses were the result of the Asia Minor campaign, which began with the intention of pacifying the country and protecting the Christian inhabitants and ended with the ejection of all the Greek Christian communities. It opened in May, 1919, the Allies approving, with the landing of Greek forces at Smyrna; it ended, Venizelos having fallen and the Allies having withdrawn their support, with the defeat of the Greek army and the burning of Smyrna. The Treaty of Lausanne, signed in July, 1923, established the losses of territory. But Greece had paid for her defeat not in territory only, but in blood. Kemal had saved Asia Minor for Turkey and made nonsense of the Treaty of Sèvres; triumphant, his troops swept down to the coast, set fire to the Greek quarter of Smyrna, and drove the Greek population literally into the sea. Greek peasants, farmers and artisans, who before the campaign had lived in peace with the Turks, were massacred in thousands.

Even this was not the end. The Asia Minor defeat drove hundreds of thousands of Greeks from their homes; leaving everything they possessed, they fled across the Aegean to Greece. In January, 1923, Greece and Turkey signed the Convention of Lausanne, in effect a part of the Treaty of Lausanne which was to be signed six months later. The Convention provided for a *compulsory* exchange of populations; with the exception of the Greeks in Constantinople and the Moslems in Western Thrace, all Orthodox Greeks in Turkish territory were

to be sent to Greece, all Moslems in Greece were to be sent to Turkey. They might take with them their movable property; immovable property, or property left behind, was to be liquidated.

For Greece, indeed, there was nothing else to be done. Obviously the hundreds of thousands who had fled from Asia Minor could never be taken back; by consenting to the compulsory emigration of those who still remained in Turkey—few by comparison—she gained at least the property of the Turks who were to leave her own soil. The situation was nevertheless hideous.

Consider the facts. In 1920, according to the official census, Greece had a population of roughly five and a half million, including the inhabitants of the territories of Eastern Thrace, Karagatch, Imbros, and Tenedos, newly acquired from Turkey. With the loss of these territories the population was reduced by about half a million; it was further reduced by war losses, by the emigration of Bulgarians, and by the compulsory emigration of Moslems, estimated at 380,000. Greece now had to take in refugees, including many from Bulgaria and Russia, numbering, according to a reliable authority, 1,300,000; at one time they were estimated at over a million and a half. A country, in fact, with a normal population of five million had to find space, lodging, food and general means of support for over a million and a quarter immigrants, most of them destitute.

Greece reacted as few other nations would have reacted.

"It was not simply courage that she exhibited at this point. Courage was not enough to turn such a tide; there

was something else, difficult to define, a certain obstinate power, perhaps due to racial characteristics accumulated during previous centuries, when for long periods Greeks had to fight to maintain their individuality against powerful groups of other racial stocks. Under his pleasant exterior the Greek was revealed as a person of very tough and unyielding fibre." *

The country did what she could for herself; America endorsed a Near East Relief Fund on a large scale; and the League of Nations established a Refugee Settlement Commission. In 1924 an international loan was floated; by the end of 1926 the Commission had established over 147,000 families of rural refugees and constructed nearly 17,000 houses for urban refugees, in addition to more than 22,000 built by the State. The work of settlement (not a work of charity, since the refugees were expected ultimately to pay back the money lent them) was carried on by the Commission until 1930, when it was handed over to Greece herself.

In 1926 it was well under way. But it was still a heavy problem; still the refugees were talked of as one talks of a dreadful epidemic; still on the outskirts of Athens there were groups of pathetic shanties where these sad people clung merely to life. Within a few years of their arrival they had shown themselves an asset, bringing large new areas under cultivation in Macedonia and setting in general an example of industry and tenacity. But that Greece should have absorbed them as she did was a miracle. Excuses are sometimes made for countries which

* *Greece and the Greek Refugees*. By Charles B. Eddy, Chairman of the Greek Refugee Settlement Commission.

disintegrate or lose their moral balance: it was, people say, all due to the Treaty of Versailles. It is not a bad idea to remind them that Greece survived the Treaty of Lausanne and in the end triumphed over it. For some time past a treaty has come to mean a delayed-action declaration of war. The Turks and the Greeks have been singular in not making the close of one war the excuse for the beginning of another.

The Treaty of Lausanne, which drew the lines of the frontier, much fought over, many times changed, between the two countries, also wrote the end of a chapter of conflict which opened with the Greek War of Independence in 1821. In June, 1930, seven years after the Lausanne Convention, the questions which had arisen out of its provisions for the exchange of populations and the liquidation of property were finally settled by the Convention of Ankara. Before the end of the year a Treaty of Neutrality, Conciliation, and Arbitration and a Convention relating to Commerce had been signed at Ankara. At Lausanne the Convention was signed by Venizelos for Greece and by Ismet Pasha (now President Inönu) for Turkey. At Ankara the same two men signed; this time not a Convention proceeding out of victory and defeat, but a Treaty between two nations at peace.

When I last saw Athens the face of the surrounding country had long lost the distraught air it still wore in 1926. In the Athenian plain the refugee settlements founded in the early days of the influx from Asia Minor had grown up into large and well-ordered suburbs. Nea Ionia, Nea Kokkinia, Kaisariani, Byron—adjoining Athens and Piraeus, spreading out into the coastal plain

and over the dry country towards the hills, everywhere refugees living in their own homes. Sometimes, as in the Hymettos settlement, where by 1930 the Refugee Settlement Commission had built 550 houses, they were established in solid little villas with land for gardens; sometimes avenues of trees had been planted in the streets; always the evidence of toil, industry, difficulties tackled. In 1926 people in Athens sometimes talked sadly of the changes in the countryside caused by the expansion of the city. Twelve years later the expansion had been consolidated; Athens had grown out of knowledge.

As the outskirts changed, the centre of Athens, too, changed. Classical archaeologists had long been anxious to see the ancient Agora excavated; to undertake this, however, meant clearing a large area of central Athens and expropriating a considerable number of people living in the old Turkish houses of the quarter. In 1931 the American School of Classical Studies, armed with the necessary resources and with the co-operation of the Greek Government, began work on a large scale. Important archaeological discoveries were made during the following years; in the process houses were pulled down, streets were dug up, and the old Turkish section of Athens at the foot of the Acropolis began to show gaps in its huddle of flat roofs and white stucco walls.

The game was certainly well worth the candle. But sentimentalists going back to Athens after a long absence missed a bit of the ramshackle, dusty charm of the old Acropolis quarter. One of the things the visitor used to be shown, after he had been run round the Acropolis, the Theseion, the Museums, the Arch of Hadrian, and

the Temple of the Olympian Zeus, was the last remnant of the bazaar. Shoe Lane, the English used to call it, after the red, heel-less slippers with pompoms on the toes which hung in strings, like Breton onions, outside the shops. These are the shoes worn by the Euzones, the crack corps of the Greek Army—the Guards, as it were, of Athens; their traditional national costume, always picturesque, and on ceremonial occasions magnificent, includes long white stockings and the fustanella—the short white kilted skirt of the national dress. They are the shoes also worn by countrymen all over the mainland of Greece who have not yet accepted European dress. But in Shoe Lane they are, or were, produced for the tourist as well as the Greek: little slippers with blue-and-white pompoms, tiny bright slippers for children; scores of them, hundreds of them, dangling and clapping together from shutters and awnings. In the same shop, perhaps, an assortment of curios, baubles, embroideries, banal Greek antiques. Ten years ago no private person in Greece could legally possess a Greek antique, and theoretically every fragment of bronze, every potsherd dug up by a peasant in his field or his vineyard was taken to the local authority and handed on to a museum. In practice, naturally, the country people sold their finds to dealers and, as with Prohibition, the restrictive decree produced a brisk illegal traffic. Later the law was amended, enabling private people to possess collections of antiques on the understanding that the objects had been declared to the authorities; the veto on taking antiques out of the country, of course, remained.

Smuggled antiques, then, in the Shoe Lane shops: but

they were hardly shops; booths, rather, little crowded boxes with a friendly knowing showman, lining the tiny thread of a street. It was in Shoe Lane that I first became aware of the genuine sociability of even the most interested Greek. If you bought something, well and good. If you went back another day, well and better; the dealer remembered every detail of the last visit, unrolled again the embroidery you had not bought, unwrapped from a shred of paper in a back drawer the curiosity he had mentioned as being in the possession of a shadowy Anonymous. If you bought nothing, eh, never mind, tomorrow perhaps, another time; come back. The shadow of the alien did not hang over one for long in Athens. Soon every shop revisited—the grocer with the big tubs of black olives, the chemist, the stationer, the bookshop, the tobacconist—harboured a friend. Even the girls in the General Post Office were human.

"Pardon," said one of them as I handed in a telegram, "have you a mirror, a little mirror, in your bag? I left home in a hurry this morning and forgot to bring mine. Ah, thank you very much." And with an air of relief she patted her hair, powdered her nose, and smeared on a scrap of lipstick.

As the spring gathers strength Athens puts on gaiety and charm. It is not fully itself in winter; and indeed all Greece lives with an intenser life in summer. In winter, it is true, Athens has brilliant days, with the sun in January as warm as an English May sun. But the nights bring back bitter cold, and in the clear sky the stars—the English stars but magnified and multiplied until you feel that you have never looked at the night sky before—glitter

with the calm ferocity of ice. Next morning, perhaps, the day is overcast, and a gusty wind blows rain down the streets.

Athens is a place of violent wind: the northerly winds in winter, and in summer often the enervating southerly wind, the sirocco which, they tell you, comes straight from the sands of Egypt and is not cooled on the way. But when the winds are quiet there is no more vivacious and welcoming city. Already in February the hills round Athens are mauve with anemones, and in the gardens of the rich villas at Kifissia the violets are massed. A warm, soft morning: in Kolonaki, the small square with the well-watered garden on the slope of Lykabettos, the little provision stores are humming: somebody buying Kalamata olives, someone asking for Patras olives, a little rice, oil, macaroni, and—yes, Quaker Oats; "Quacker Owats", they used to be called. The shoe-shine man has a customer; a taxi-driver draws up on the rank and lights a cigarette; on the corner of Kanari Street a donkey is standing, shifting patiently from one hoof to another. He carries panniers on each side, panniers overflowing with flowers: anemones, violets, tulips, and branches of almond-blossom. A woman has bought some branches, and walks away up the hill with her arms full of pink and snowy clouds; she shakes them to dislodge a bee thrown in with her purchase, and a shower of papery petals falls to the pavement. Somewhere in the distance there is a strange drumming and piping and gibbering; if you go to look you may find two or three street masquers keeping Carnival, with a hobby-horse prancing gravely in the middle.

There will be little keeping of Carnival now until the war is over and Greece is free. At the best of times it is not much celebrated nowadays; though all afternoon, a few years ago, and afternoon after afternoon, we used to hear in the streets round Lykabettos the monotonous exciting beat and the restless wandering tune of the players. In smart Athenian society it used to be, however, the occasion for a certain amount of formal gaiety: receptions, dances, tea-parties, masticha-parties. The hours of life in Athens are disconcerting at first to English people. The afternoon, as the British in their own country understand it, scarcely exists. After lunch all the well-to-do people and the bourgeoisie go into hiding; most of the shops are shut, in summer till about four o'clock, and the servants are invisible. Everybody rests—except, of course, the British, known facetiously by a compound word which might be translated "mad-english". To call on an acquaintance before five o'clock would be eccentric; and an invitation to a tea-party implies an appointment, particularly in summer, between six and seven o'clock. A masticha-party, the equivalent of a cocktail-party, begins at the earliest at seven o'clock. Masticha is a sweetish apéritif, faintly flavoured and made from the gum of the mastix; the tree grows chiefly in Chios. Ouzo, the other popular Greek apéritif, is stronger, fierier, with a strong flavour of aniseed; it is generally drunk mixed with water, when it turns milky. Greece makes also a vermouth of her own as well as cognac and a variety of local apéritifs of singular ferocity, not usually to be bought in Athens. In the houses of wealthy Greeks one used to be offered Euro

pean drinks; but in the last ten years the tendency to drink native wine and spirits has increased; smart people were even beginning to discover the virtues of Greek resinated wine.

Masticha, ouzo, vermouth; in wealthy houses, an astonishing display of hot and cold *hors d'oeuvres*. I speak now of the cosmopolitan Greeks, the Greeks who own shady villas in the suburbs to which they withdraw when Athens grows dusty; the Greeks who used, in easier times, to go every year "to Europe"; the oriental tradition was strong enough to make them imply that Greece itself was not Europe. Most of them have had French or English governesses; even when talking amongst themselves they drop into French; for the comfort of British guests they speak, many of them, easy, excellent English. The men come, perhaps, a shade reluctantly to these social functions, which are rather the affair of their wives; still, there they are, neat, smart, saluting the women with a gallant Continental hand-kiss. Next day the fashionable intelligence column of the Athens newspapers assures its readers that at yesterday's party Madame K. was charming in black, Miss L. most elegant in blue, and Madame Z. very chic in an *imprimé toilette*.

Athens before the war had its fashionable society, just as any other European capital: a small stratum of people entertaining largely and expensively in their houses and at the smart clubs—the Tennis Club, the Golf Club, the Yacht Club; the women among them beautifully dressed, buying their clothes at the few discreet dressmakers who supply the city with its models for the year, more Parisian

than the Parisians; the only difference is in their amiability and hospitality towards foreigners. The same friendliness and hospitality are found in every class of Greek society; in the country to an extraordinary extent.

The middle and professional classes in Athens live, naturally, less socially than the wealth and fashion; they live, however, comfortably and well. Nearly all people of education can speak French; in the larger shops, too, it is fairly easy for the foreigner to get along without speaking Greek. The big shops and stores are, indeed, much like the shops of Western Europe. In the last few years the imported goods which used to fill the shop-windows had to a great extent vanished, though Greece's clearing agreement with Germany still forced her to accept a fair amount of German manufactured goods. But the effort of the country had been to replace foreign with native manufactures; one year you found the chemists' shops stocked with German and French and English drugs and cosmetics, the next you found Greek drugs, Greek soaps and face-creams.

In particular the Greeks had been extremely successful in the manufacture of silks. The French silks which all well-dressed women used to wear had been supplanted, and two or three years ago the Athenian drapers were full of fine and beautiful Greek silks in which the elegances of French patterns had been reproduced. But in one re spect the Greek women's shops are quite different from the shops of London or Paris; they sell no ready-made clothes, or scarcely any. The woman not rich enough to choose dresses at the expensive establishment in the

quiet street with the haughty little entrance, the salon, and the mannequins, goes down Hermes Street, buys material, and hands it over to a cheap dressmaker; sometimes even to her maid; in either case she turns out looking extravagantly smart. In Athens only the well-to-do woman can afford to see her clothes before she buys them.

The workers of Athens live mostly on the outskirts of the city or in the crowded streets of the old quarters; Piraeus has a large population of artisans and manual workers. Wages have risen in recent years; and a great effort has been made in the sphere of hygiene and general public welfare. The standard of living among the poorer workers is low; but when one considers the natural difficulties of a country almost wholly agricultural, when one remembers that 120 years ago Greece was a subject nation, that when Athens became the capital in 1834 it had only 162 houses, and that within the last thirty years Greece has fought four wars, the wonder is that the standard of living is not far lower. It is in general, as I have said, higher than that of any other Balkan country. The thrifty among the workers look forward to possessing their own houses, as indeed the system of State loans has enabled the refugees to possess theirs. A taxi-driver who has driven my friends and myself over much of Greece (the rates were low enough to make it well worth while for the visitor to hire a car for several days) built himself a charming little house near the sea beyond Phaleron. My husband and I knew him for some years before we were invited to see it, for the simple Greeks are shyer in the towns than in the country of asking

foreigners to their houses. At first his hospitality was professional. Some summer evening, perhaps, he would drive us out to Rhamnous, on the coast facing Euboea; we would bathe from the rocky shore and then, as the bright mountains folded themselves in night, sit on the broken walls of the sanctuary of Nemesis, eating our host's good Greek food and drinking his resinated wine. This was an occasion to remember; even better was it to dine in the garden of his little house, under the pergola where the young vines already climbed, and look out at the Saronic Gulf and the curve of lights on the bay, while his wife served the food, and his children hurried with plates and dishes.

"How many children have you?"

"Five, all boys," he would say, chuckling with satisfaction.

"May they live!" The conventional wish is essential, lest to admire or even notice a child should bring it ill luck.

But this was long after my first acquaintance with Athens. In ten years of visiting and living in Greece the country, always beautiful but in the first days strange and alien, had become a welcoming country, a country of friends. People who love Greece must, when they are cut off from her, feel each the nostalgia for some place, some landscape in particular. I think most of the countryside, but Athens can never for long be out of the minds of those who have come to know it. And it is of the summer Athens that I think.

There is a legend among English people that Greece is a consistently hot country with a spring unimpeach-

ably sunny. The fact, of course, is that Greece has two climates: on the coast and in the islands, a Mediterranean climate, the climate of the Riviera; in the mountains and inland Macedonia and the river-valleys of Thrace, a violent, "continental" climate with severe snowy winters. But in no part of Greece is there settled heat before May. In February, though the corn in the plains is already green, the weather is apt to be cold and stormy, and in March there may be long periods of rain and bitter winds; April, the favourite month for visitors, is often wicked-tempered, and I remember snow falling at Andritsaina in Arcadia on the 23rd. Summer takes command about the middle of May, and holds the country, with perhaps a few thunderstorms, a rare, a very rare shower, until the first rains of September and October. It is under summer that Athens turns into a Southern city: a city sometimes gay with hot sun and cold north wind, sometimes nervous and restless with the furnace-puffs of a sirocco, sometimes still and sweltering under a temperature of over 100° Fahrenheit.

Then at last the Western European begins to appreciate the Athenian hours of living. Most Athenians get up early in the morning and breakfast lightly; after the morning's work, lunch and the afternoon siesta; the city is not really stirring again until six o'clock. Evening brings a kind of release after the heat of the day; a heat so stunning that the policemen on point duty on their stools, even the sentries, stand under striped umbrellas, and so dusty that a little boy in buttons waits at the restaurant door with a feather brush to flick your shoes

as you come in. By seven o'clock Athens has come to fresh life. At every café, in side-street or main street or square, tables have been put out on the pavement: the vast space at the lower end of Constitution Square is covered with tables; and everywhere people are sitting over an ouzo or a masticha or a glass of the light Greek beer, or an ice perhaps, or a cup of the Turkish coffee, which, they say, can be ordered, from unsweetened through middling to very sweet, in forty-two different styles.

The air hums: people talking, hundreds of feet sauntering, a boy shouting lottery tickets, buses rushing, motor-horns squawking; among the chairs at one café pushes a boy selling jasmine, then a man with a basket of nuts, then another with sponges, and another peddling clothes-hangers. The women walking past or sitting at the tables wear bright summer frocks; hardly any wear stockings; the men are in white suits of linen or rough, solid Greek silk, and panama hats, or, the poorer among them, thick straw boaters. In the public gardens of the Zappeion there are one or two little orchestras playing waltz music or jazz. Presently people will come to dine here at the restaurants under the trees; some will go to the sea, to Phaleron or beyond; some to the tavernas, the genuine, indigenous, little restaurants of Athens. Almost everybody will dine in the open air, whether in the gardens or on the shore or on some Athenian roof-terrace; nobody will dine before nine o'clock.

There are outdoor variety shows in the Zappeion gardens; you could eat your dinner, look at the clowns and the lethargic belly-dancers, and listen to the sentimental

singer. After dinner some people would go to an open-air cinema. The last performance began about eleven; Athenians not only rise early, they keep late hours; in summer they sleep little. Two or three times during the film there will be an interval; the story will break off, the audience, sitting at its tables, will order another coffee or an ice. The films shown in Athens before the war were American, French, or German, given with Greek captions; I do not remember seeing a British film. American film stars sometimes wear an exotic air when their names are transliterated in Greek. Modern Greek pronounces b as v, d as th; the sound of b is written mp, the sound of d, nt. British and American admirers of a star of the silent films used to be startled years ago to see her name large on the posters: MPILLU NTOB. About ten years ago German musical films were popular; that was in the days when Lillian Harvey was a star in Germany; lately Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers charmed the Athenians. But besides the favourite light musical films serious Continental films used to be given; I shall not forget a warm, still summer night when, amidst the vague sounds of strolling feet, and waiters, and the snatches of music from the variety show near by, I saw a Frenchman's version of "Crime and Punishment".

This summer existence had a liveliness native to Athens. It was a liveliness inherent in the town Greeks, a gaiety which has survived many national tribulations and will survive what has now befallen; in essence, one feels, Athens will not be changed by the Italian occupation. Even the most trivial aspects of the city's life had charm.

For the diners there used to be a great variety of restaurants, great enough to mark every social stratum and every shade of taste. In summer there was less of a crowd at the two big cosmopolitan hotels in the middle of Athens, and smart society was driven to dine in Kifissia, cool on the hottest night; at the Casino at Glyfada, twelve miles away on the coast, where there was no baccarat, indeed, but a little bathing beach and a stone floor for open-air dancing; or at one of the fashionable tavernas in Athens itself. The middle-class Athenians went to the Zappeion or to the business men's restaurants in the main streets; some of them, too, to dance at Glyfada, or sit by the sea at Phaleron, or listen to the songs at the smart tavernas. Now and then in the evening the players went from table to table with lute and fiddle and sang into the ears of likely-looking customers; they sang the Greek dance-tunes of the moment, tangoes with refrains in which the words "love" and "embrace" recurred with ingenuous regularity. If pressed, they would oblige with a genuine popular tune "Barbayanni", a satirical little song written half a century ago about a living eccentric; or a famous Kleftic song, a brigand's song from the time of the Turkish domination; or the Athenian nonsense song, "Along the Shore":

> If the sea, the sea were wine,
> And the mountains, the mountains tit-bits,
> And the rocks rachi-glasses
> For the carousers to drink. . . .

But often they thought it a trifle beneath their dignity to sing the songs of the people; you were more likely to hear these at the genuine, unfashionable tavernas of

Athens or the seashore beyond Phaleron; indeed, there are many Greeks who would think it foolish to go anywhere else.

In winter and spring the Athens tavernas are warm, smoky, rich with the aroma of stewing and roasting and frying. You go into the kitchen to choose your food; or, sometimes, the kitchen is open to view as you enter the restaurant itself—an array of huge copper pans steaming over the fire, and the cook standing stirring and ladling.

"What have you got today?"

"We have meat, pilaff, lamb with beans, veal; we have fish too, excellent red mullet. . . ."

The cook displays the stewpans in turn, opens the cupboard and shows the shining fish; you order lamb roasted in paper, perhaps, or *kokkoretsia*—bits of liver and heart and kidney compressed and spiced and wound with intestine on a spit—and resinated wine to drink with it. Entertainers appear now and then and wander past the diners; a conjurer sets up a table and does tricks with billiard balls, a shabby poet declaims his verse in a disinterested bellow. One taverna kept, some years ago, a tame goose called Ramona which used to waddle politely among the tables. Caricaturists frequent the smarter tavernas, one of which has its walls covered with crayon heads of visitors; the correct thing is to buy your caricature on the spot. It was, by the way, in a corner of the garden at the same taverna that a signpost was set up saying in Greek: "He ate here", and in English: "Here he eat"—a reverent memorial to the visit in 1936 of Edward VIII.

In summer it is customary for every taverna with a garden or a yard to move its tables into the open air; a score of them used to come to life on the coast from Phaleron to Glyfada. Outside some of them wait dozens of private cars, a sign that fashionable Athens has found good food and cooking. There is more of the true Greece to be found at the smaller, less sophisticated places; at that simple taverna, for instance, where the gigantic Cretan proprietor greets favoured guests, where the tables are set on the flat shore a few feet above the sea or on the tiny beach, where you can use a rock as bathing tent and swim in a moonlit sea. When you are dressed the food is ready: the peddler has opened a dozen of the small, sweet shellfish called in Greek sea-quinces and squeezed a drop of lemon-juice on each, the waiter has brought the stuffed aubergines, the wine is cold; casually the players strum a song and sing with muted voices in the dark. This is the romantic Athens of which one thinks with nostalgia: more persistent in regret than the Athens of progress and the modern world.

Yet progress and modern enterprise have been there. At Marathon the American Ulen Company had constructed an impressive dam by means of which Athens was supplied with good and plentiful water; and as far afield as Vouliagmeni—the bright beach with the pine-woods sixteen miles away where on Sundays hundreds of Athenians went to bathe—the summer restaurants served Ulen water. A National Theatre opened in Athens, and reopened each season with productions of classical Greek tragedy and Shakespeare. The old flower-

sellers' stands were replaced by a row of little stone booths in which the flowers of spring and summer blazed all the brighter. Blocks of modern flats appeared in the residential quarters round Lykabettos. New houses, new cafés, new restaurants at Phaleron made that stretch of the coast gay and prosperous, and in summer the trams swayed along the promenade beside beds of oleanders. Athens became a modern city with modern buildings, communications, newspapers, advertisements, entertainments: a capital with theatres, cinemas, and an orchestra whose occasional performances on summer nights filled the Roman theatre at the foot of the Acropolis, the Odeion of Herodes Atticus. Every year there were changes. And as the city changed, the lives of its people changed with it. The handsome roads along the coast meant buses, and buses meant a chance for the people of Athens to escape from the dust of the city. They seized their chance, and where fifteen years ago one Athenian went bathing, in 1939 a score found their way to Glyfada and beyond, to Voula and Kavouri and Vouliagmeni. The workers had their own beaches.

On the other coast of Attica, south of Marathon, a rough track leads to a curve of sand and shingle fringed with pines. On Sundays as the summer reached its full strength parties on carts and lorries came down the road through Spata and took the track to the sea: family parties, men and women with their elders and their children; and there they camped, tying up their horses to the trees, and eating, singing, and sleeping in the shade. A mile or two to the north there is a village with a harbour, Rafina; farther south, another little port, Porto

Rafti. The names were unknown outside Greece. They have been heard of since; for it was to these beaches and these harbours that, in the spring of 1941, British and Australian and New Zealand soldiers came to re-embark.

CHAPTER VI

THE COUNTRY

ATHENS stands at the centre of the communications of Greece. From Piraeus, the port of Athens, sail the ships of the Archipelago; from Athens radiate the new roads of Greece; from Athens the trains run south to the Peloponnese, north to what was Europe and is now a slave-market. Athens is the mind of Greece. But it draws its strength from the country and the sea. Always, at the back of even the sophisticated life of the capital, a solid life, a country life can be felt; the hills which overlook the busy centre of the city, the fertile plains at their feet, constantly remind one of it; the food in restaurants and shops comes straight from the earth of Greece, bearing with it something of the warmth of sun and the strength of hard soil; the people who work in Athens have the qualities of mingled vivacity and stoicism which characterise the people of field and mountain, for in Greece there is no gulf, as there is in England, between countryman and townsman. And always some essence of the sea sharpens the life of Athens: the sea which gives vigour, fortitude, and a kind of toughness to the Greek character. It should never be forgotten how strong in the Archipelago is the tradition of seafaring and sea-trading.

If you took the road which leads westward out of Athens, leaving behind the trams and the marketing streets

and the poor houses of the approaches to the city, you would come soon to the pass over the foothills to the plain of Eleusis. Suddenly between the pines there is the blue of the bay of Eleusis; beyond it, Salamis; in the strait between the island and the mainland the battle of Salamis was fought, and from some spot on the rocky shore to the left Xerxes saw the rout of his fleet. The road from Athens to the Eleusinian plain is one of the best in Greece; it was already good in 1926, when the country had few good roads, the legend being that Pangalos, then Dictator, had a villa near Eleusis and built it to suit himself. A little way outside Eleusis the road forks. The right fork goes north: this is the way to Thebes, Oedipus's Thebes, and so across plains and over mountain passes to Thessaly and Macedonia. The left fork goes, as the signpost used laconically to remark, to the Peloponnese. As I first remember them, these were rough and ragged roads; within a few years they had been transformed into good hard roads along which motor-traffic went at a rattling pace. The majority of cars in Greece are American; the taxis in Athens, the hired cars which used to rush tourists through the country, the growling cars in provincial towns, are most often second-hand American cars. In the days when even the main roads—the road between Thebes and Delphi, the road from Corinth to Sparta—were full of pot-holes, British cars were too low-slung for hard use in Greece. Since then roads have been built; but in the interval American cars captured the market. In the last years few cars, if any, had been imported, for Greece, like so many other European countries, was practising autarky.

Self-sufficiency was not easy for her. Consider the

nature of the country. Northern or Continental Greece is split by huge mountain chains and massifs; along the coast, where the mountains decline to the bays and gulfs of the Ionian and the Aegean, or caught between them like pools between rocks, the plains which help to feed Greece, plains growing corn, tobacco, cotton, olives; upland pasture also for sheep and goats; stockbreeding is the main business of Epirus. In the Peloponnese, a vast central complex of mountains, from Erymanthos, Chelmos, and Kyllene, stretching across the north of Arcadia, to Taygetos in the south; caught, again, between their walls, the high plains of Arcadia, green and cool in summer when the low-lying plains are on fire with heat. Here, too, grows corn, ripening later than in the lowlands; from the plains of Mantineia and Tegea comes a dryish pink wine, unresinated. Round the coasts, olives again: the famous pointed olives of Kalamata in the south, the fat, sweet olives of Patras in the north-west. From the coastal strip of plain near the Isthmus, the tight bunches of black, seedless grapes which, by a corruption of the name Corinth, we call currants; from Achaia, farther west, wine-giving grapes. The islands produce, some of them, wine and dessert fruits; Crete grows sultana grapes; Samos has a sweet muscaty dessert wine.

Tobacco, olives, wine, currants, corn, cotton—these are the chief agricultural products. Greece produces also some bauxite, chrome ore, zinc, lead, manganese, nickel, iron ore, magnesite, pyrites, and silver; not, however, in quantities large enough to contribute greatly to the national income. Much of the country grows nothing but rock; the mountains give inhospitable soil, and in 1929

only fifteen and a half per cent. of the whole area was arable land. Greece must import to live, that was one side of the story. On the other side was her export trade. Her plan was to specialise in "Mediterranean" crops and rely largely on imports of wheat and cattle products for her own use. But the economic disasters of recent years frustrated the plan. Tobacco, currants, raisins, olives, wine, and figs: these she used to sell abroad; but with the depression, with competition from elsewhere, export grew more and more difficult, in particular export of luxuries. To make up for the shrinking of exports, Greece tried, like the rest of Europe, to import less and produce more for herself.

The attempt was to a considerable degree successful. In the years after 1928 industrial output was increased by over fifty per cent. More cotton was grown, more textiles were made. Lignite produced at home partly replaced coal imported from abroad. In ten years the production of wheat was trebled. But it was still not enough; Greece still must buy wheat, half as much again as she grew herself. Meanwhile the difficulty of selling her own produce persisted: in particular the two main crops, currants and tobacco. In 1940 it was suggested that Greek currants should be carried in Greek ships to England via Suez; belated, the plan failed, since the currants would spoil on the long voyage.

The currant crop, however, was not the major question. Greece was largely dependent on one valuable crop: her tobacco. The export of tobacco has been among the most urgent problems of South-eastern Europe, Turkey and Bulgaria as well as Greece being anxiously involved; and tobacco was an important factor in the German drive for

economic supremacy in the Balkans. In 1937, when Metaxas had been in power for a year, there was some concern over the extent of Greco-German trade, and questions were being asked about Greece's reasons for buying armaments from Germany and not from Great Britain.

"Germany is an important customer for us," Metaxas told me at that time, "because she buys our chief product, our tobacco, in return for which we take German goods and a certain amount of armaments, since she cannot pay us in currency. Surely it is obvious that we should be only too ready to trade with England, whose currency is the strongest and the safest in the world? We do indeed buy English goods to the extent of double the amount of her purchases from us. The balance we pay from the profits of our trade with other countries; so that rightly England should regard Greece as a good customer. But she will not buy our tobacco. Some little time ago there was a question of Greece buying armaments from Great Britain. Had she been willing to take our tobacco in exchange the deal would have been effected; as it was she offered a credit which we were unable to accept.

"I only ask one thing of Great Britain. Let her buy five per cent, no more, of her total tobacco consumption from Greece, and Anglo-Greek trade will once more return to its former proportions."

The principle on which German trade with South-eastern Europe was carried on was in essence simple enough; it was the principle of the clearing agreements already practised between the Balkan countries. Balkan exporters were finding it difficult to secure markets for

their goods owing to the fall of agricultural prices combined with the artificial over-valuation of their national currencies; Germany was willing to buy, but not to hand over the cash. German importers therefore paid the prices of the goods into an account at the German Reichsbank, the State Bank; the money in the account was used to pay, not the exporters in the Balkans, but German exporters who had sold goods to the Balkans.

In the Balkan countries similar accounts were established; into, say, the account in Athens was paid the money due from Greek importers to German exporters, from it was drawn the money due from German importers to Greek exporters. The money thus did not change hands internationally; no foreign exchange was needed; only goods passed between the two countries in a system of bilateral barter. To the countries of South-eastern Europe, feeling, financially, not very grand, the system appeared the more desirable since the German marks so lavishly paid into the Reichsbank were Reichsmarks kept for the purposes of the clearing agreements, and, needless to say, over-valued. The prices, in fact, paid by Germany for Rumanian wheat, Yugoslav maize, Greek and Bulgarian tobacco were high in relation to those which would have been paid by anyone else; the money was there, splendidly banked in Reichsmarks; the only drawback was that, as far as the Balkan countries were concerned, it could not be got at; it was, in the high financial phrase, frozen; frozen Reichsmarks.

For the system to work equitably, trade between Germany and each individual South-eastern European country should have balanced, and the prices charged should

have been fair to both buyer and seller. But the high value of the Reichsmark was apt to cut both ways. While it was an advantage to the Balkan exporter, to the Balkan importer it was a disadvantage; Greek goods sold to Germany might fetch, in relation to their own currency, high prices, but on the other hand German goods sold to Greece demanded also high prices. Agriculturists who wanted to sell were satisfied with the arrangement; industrialists who wished to buy found themselves fobbed off with expensive goods which nobody wanted. The spectacle of internal dissension, class set against class, in the small States was thus added to Germany's many blessings. Meanwhile the high prices and the restricted choice made importers reluctant to buy German products, and there was a tendency for large balances in favour of the small countries to pile up in the Reichsbank accounts. By the end of 1935, for instance, Greece had a credit balance of 21.9 million Reichsmarks in the German clearing account. The balance could be righted only if she accepted large imports from Germany.

Metaxas, when he took over the Government in 1936, thus inherited also the problem of Greece's frozen Reichsmark balance. In the following years the position was greatly improved; and when I was in Greece in the summer of 1938 the creditor-debtor balance had so far shifted as to make it once more possible for the Greeks to look for economic alliance towards this country instead of towards Germany. That was the summer of the projected British and French trade drive in South-eastern Europe, received by Germany with sour warnings about the consequences of trying to use "silver or golden bullets" against her

and countered by her own trade drive in the same area. Once again that year Greeks spoke urgently of the tobacco crop and their dependence on its export: if only, they said, repeating what Metaxas had said twelve months earlier, Great Britain would buy five per cent. of the tobacco she used from Greece, no obstacle would remain to an economic agreement.

The matter, indeed, engaged the attention of the British at the time; there were, about then, discussions, schemes, disappointments. A plan was debated for introducing a small percentage of Greek tobacco into the cigarettes produced by the big British tobacco companies. But there was the difficulty of cost: Greek tobacco was more expensive than American. There was also the difficulty of flavour. To introduce five per cent. of Greek tobacco into the cigarettes of the British companies would, the advocates of the scheme insisted, have no effect on the flavour; the difference would be imperceptible; alternatively, if there were any difference, it would be an improvement.

The argument failed, the experts, no doubt, holding that while the British public would cheerfully submit to buying cigarettes only in hours sanctioned by the Defence of the Realm Act, it would never tolerate having them improved. The scheme languished and was for the moment put aside. In 1938 the United Kingdom bought from Greece less than 0.5 per cent. of our total imports of tobacco. Yet in 1937 a British financial adviser in Greece had assured one that it would be worth our while to buy the tobacco crop and throw it away rather than allow the German hold on Greek economy to gain strength. It says much for the independence of the Greek national char-

acter and the strength of the traditional ties with Great Britain that in spite of German economic intrigue, in spite of British lack of economic adaptability, it was on the side of this country that Greece fought.

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Exports of tobacco and currants, cotton-growing, vineyards, olive-groves, corn-land, pasture-land—behind the economic structure and the trade balance, behind the industrial and agricultural production, the features of the country and the people wait to be distinguished. Let us look at land and people as they were before the assault of war, and see in what tranquillity grew the heroism which faced the assault.

Speaking in the most general terms, one might say that Greece is a peasant country: a country where, except in the most rarefied society, every man and woman has roots in the land. I have already said that in Athens one is conscious always, behind the ephemeral city life, of the endurance of the living soil. Outside Athens that is a thousand times more insistent. It must, of course, be understood that outside Athens, Piraeus (by now a crowded extension of Athens), and Salonika, a port with a quarter of a million inhabitants, what in England we mean by a city scarcely exists in Greece. There are harbour towns: Volo in Thessaly; Patras, Corinth, and Aighion, distributors of currants, wine, oil, on the Gulf of Corinth; Kalamata in the south, a lively little port trading in oil, wine, and the famous Messenian oranges and figs. There are provincial centres: Larissa, before it was destroyed by bombing, the rich market of Thessaly; Tripolis, prosperous capital of

Arcadia; there are the tobacco centres, Kavalla in the Macedonian tobacco-growing district, Agrinion near Missolonghi. But the largest of them seems small by the standards of an industrial country such as Great Britain: Patras looks less imposing than Worthing, Tripolis smaller than Tunbridge Wells. Nowhere in Greece, except in Athens, Piraeus, and Salonika, are there cities or ports on the scale of English, or French, or Italian cities or ports.

And always the Greek towns and harbours are separated from one another by great spaces of country, tractable or intractable; the urban centres are isolated in the soil, and there is nothing of that linking of city, town, town, city which characterises an industrialised nation. The provincial towns, far more obviously than Athens, draw their life from the land; they exist only as centres for the marketing of the land's gifts; the harbours, too, live directly on the fruits of Greek agriculture, taking and distributing the country's wine, oil, vegetables, fruit, corn, cheese.

Round the towns the plains and mountains press close. Communications, though greatly improved in the past ten or fifteen years, offer little scope for the customary interchanges of urban life; the railway sometimes omits to call at a port, the road sometimes takes a roundabout way from town to town. Huge mountain ranges cut off one district, one system of plains, from another, and the configuration of the country makes it a day's journey to cross from one valley to the next. In the enormous gaps between the towns, the life of the villages goes on, incomparably remote. Villages clustered in the sheltered angles of the

plains or planted astride the roads which snake across them; villages on the sea-shore, villages in the mountains, villages too high to be lived in when the winter comes: here is the unchanging, the true life of the Greek mainland. And this is the life which nourishes the other life of the towns and the capital. From the villages and from the tiny towns which are scarcely more than villages, an incessant stream of men has flowed to the larger towns and the capital: young men wanting a change from the ploughing and digging of peasant life, young men anxious to study, young men beginning to make their way. It is astonishing to find how many of the people living and working in Athens come from country districts and how few are by birth Athenians: it would, I fancy, be astonishing also, were one to enquire into the parentage of Greek public figures, to find how large a proportion of them come from the villages of both mainland and islands.

The life of the country, fortunately, has not yet been weakened by this movement to the capital; indeed, excepting the lucky or the unusually talented, there has been a tendency for men to drift back in time to the less competitive existence of the small provincial towns. But the relationship between urban and rustic life is strengthened. The Athenian taxi-driver has a wife from an Arcadian village; the cook has relatives in the Argolid; the young man running with plates in the café in Boeotia has a brother ("a good boy with schooling") working in a restaurant in Piraeus. And in the small towns the distinction between the black-coat and the man working with his hands has little practical observance. The old shepherd with his fustanella and his tall crook sits down at the same table in

the café with the man in the dark suit and the black felt hat; the doctor and the curator of the little local museum drink their coffee in company with the peasant. The country people of Greece are, perhaps, too close to their natural background to be very sharply aware of the social niceties; the vast, calm landscape, dwarfing equally the figures of men and the villages which shelter them, gives, perhaps, a kind of unanimity to their hard and frugal lives.

To one travelling north-west from Athens the constant relationship between man and nature is clear. The region of Attica near the capital is, for Greece, gentle country: vineyards and olive-groves in the rich red earth behind Hymettos and Pentelikon, pine-woods towards Marathon; mountains indeed, but, except for a few places such as the precipices of Phyle on Parnes, easy mountains. But, once beyond Eleusis, the character of the land changes. First, wild, empty mountain landscapes, the road twisting through pines and waste land with scarcely a village and only a rare wayside café, an isolated cottage; then the climb between the rocks, the air growing colder and thinner, to Eleutherae, the ancient fortress guarding the approaches into Attica, and to the pass over Mount Kithairon into Boeotia (where in April, 1941, the New Zealanders covered the Anzac retreat).

Boeotia shows perhaps better than any other district of Greece the juxtaposition of fertile and incultivable land. Railway and road run through three linked plains: the plain which has Thebes as its centre; the Copaic plain, once a swamp, famous in antiquity for its eels, but drained over half a century ago by French and British enterprise, and

now giving pasturage and fields of cotton; and the plain of Chaeronea, scene of the battle in which Philip of Macedon defeated the Greeks in 338 B.C. Here in the plains the Greek peasant works while daylight holds: in the early morning parties of men and women hurrying off to the fields, in the late evening their strong, resistant little figures trotting home on melancholy donkeys. All day they stoop over the black earth; all day the shepherd in his shaggy goatskin coat watches his flocks. The mountains look on, bright and indifferent. The plains and their villages are ringed with hills: to the north, the mountains of Locris, where the defile of Thermopylae skirts the coast; to the south, the Kithairon range; to the west, the huge crests of Helikon and Parnassos; eastward, line upon line of barriers to the sea. Nothing grows on the heights, except the firs, grave in the snows of winter; the people of the plains and the villages which cling to the slopes live by sufferance in their rich oases of arable and pasture land. The eternal company of the mountains makes of the Greeks a people hardened to toil, equal to suffering, ready for danger and privation. For them the bitter hardships of the Albanian campaign were hardships to which they had, each man in his own fashion, been apprenticed all their lives.

Nearly everywhere in Greece it is the same: valleys and plains where the soil is rich and the cultivation has an air of ease and luxuriance; then, on the hill-sides, clinging to the crannies of the coast, or lodged in the interstices of the high mountains, drifts of less generous earth; at last the unyielding, barren rock. But wherever there is a patch of soil, however thin, however poor, it is tilled; the peasant

who owns it will struggle up a mountain-side two or three hours' walk from his village, and sow the land, and reap it. The peasant-proprietors of Greece—for the soil is mostly owned by small-holders—take a just pride in their land and its fruits.

"Come into my house and drink a little glass of wine. It is good wine, from my own vines; you must try it."

In moments of confidence the hospitality may be more intimate.

"I have brought you a bottle of my own wine, good wine, strong. Drink it, and you will make a man-child, if God wills!" Harsh work, the scanty yield of small estates and single fields—ownership of land, the one solid and enduring fact in peasant life, atones for the hardships. The Greek countrymen have the quality of resignation which comes from knowledge of an unforgiving providence, but they have also the gaiety of a people satisfied with simple pleasures. In the more prosperous districts there is an air of solid self-confidence. You will find it in parts of Boeotia, or if you cross from Boeotia over the barrier of Helikon and Parnassos and come to the high village of Arachova, and Delphi, and the immense olive-groves of Amphissa in the plain below; or if you go south across the Gulf of Corinth to the mountain villages of Arcadia; or in the lively market towns such as Thebes in Boeotia or Tripolis in Arcadia.

Modern Thebes is, I suppose, the Greek equivalent of Wallingford or Witney; Tripolis might be a Greek Shrewsbury. Such places charmingly combine the pre-occupations of rural life with the amenities of the country town: buses, busy cafés, shops. In Thebes a few years

ago you would see the bus loading up for Athens, or Chalkis perhaps: baskets of produce roped on the back, suitcases slung over the bonnet, a woman in black, with black headshawl, climbing on with a bunch of hens tied together by their legs, a man hauling in a cowed, reluctant mongrel. In the streets, bustle, expostulation, acute interest in everybody's business. Thebes has, as I remember it, two main streets, deliciously shadowed by drooping trees; in one street, a couple of restaurants, a café or two, a row of shops and stalls. The cafés operate chiefly on the pavement; shoe-shine boys, spry urchins, barefoot, dart to kneel before the customers and smear their shoes with orange polish; they tuck bits of cardboard inside to protect the client's socks. In the humble restaurants they are serving bean soup; grilled fish perhaps, or a dish of lamb with macaroni; for sweet, risogala, rice pudding with grated nutmeg, or chalvas, a solid cake, like nougat, of sesame and honey. The water is excellent in Thebes, straight from the springs of Kithairon: drink it and be thankful.

The shops are bright with bales of stuffs, cottons plain and patterned which will presently be made into dresses for the girls and the children of Thebes; bright, too, with strings of red shoes, and piles of oranges, and wire baskets of pale eggs. And the street is full: full of strolling blackcoats, and youths hurrying on errands, and magnificent old men in fustanellas and white woollen stockings and little black plush caps, the elders of a less sophisticated generation. But few women. Women do not sit with the men at cafés in the country; the young girls walk together in twos and threes, but most of the women

will be working in their homes, fetching water from the spring, or labouring in the fields. It is only in Athens and the larger ports and towns that they are seen in restaurants and cafés. In the villages and the small towns you will see them sitting, on summer evenings, on the doorsteps of their houses, resting and gossiping while their children play in the dusk; at midday the men sit alone at the tables on the pavement or in the village square. This is generally taken by foreigners to be a proof of the oriental position of Greek women. The country women in Greece, indeed, are by convention regarded as the inferiors of the men: a view not uncommon in any predominantly peasant society. It is, however, not entirely irrelevant to point out that the bar of an English country pub is rarely crowded by the wives and daughters of the local farmers and labourers.

Thebes, like many places in Greece with a classical history, has a local museum. Excavation in and near the town has brought to light sculpture and great quantities of pottery, but there is little left of ancient Thebes itself. The district, though, still holds the traditions and myths of heroic Greece. The little town is built on the Cadmeia, the citadel of Cadmus who slew the dragon and sowed its teeth; beyond the plain is Mount Sphingion, now called Phagas, "the Devourer", legendary home of Oedipus's Sphinx; on the road to Delphi is the Schiste, the cross-roads where Oedipus met his unknown father driving in his chariot, and would not make way, and killed him; in the shadow of Helikon is Askra, birthplace of Hesiod, and in Helikon's folds the Valley

of the Muses and the fountain Hippocrene. Wherever one travels in Greece the past survives amidst the astonishing landscape; sometimes awakened by a name only, a legend, sometimes still surviving in the relics of archaic and classical architecture: in the theatre at Epidauros, in the streets and houses of Delos, in the great sanctuaries of Olympia and Delphi, in the monolithic columns of Apollo's temple at Corinth, in the walls and towers of Messene and Aigosthena. From some of the famous sites the tide of life has retreated, leaving them isolated and untenanted. Most often the generations of men have built their houses, century after century, on the same foundation; Delphi, for instance, was buried beneath the village of Kastri, which had to be removed and rebuilt before archaeologists could excavate the site.

The Greeks are proud of their past, both the recent and the remote past: of their fight for liberty in the nineteenth century, of the noble achievements of their creative classical age. The peasants still speak of the War of Independence as if it were within living witness. The links of memory, indeed, have not long been broken. On a walk to Thermopylae a few years ago, I remember, the muleteer talked about an old man from his village who, before his death, had acquired some notoriety as a story-teller. According to his own account, the old man had done great execution on the enemy in the War of Independence.

"He hid in a tree, he waited; there was a path below, he waited; when they came by, he leaned down, he split their heads open; a score of them he killed."

People all over Greece, even in the remotest villages,

speak of Byron as a national hero; they have adopted him, he has become not a foreigner but a Greek, and the simple among them hardly expect an English visitor to have heard of him. Sometimes the more knowledgeable of the peasants will mention Navarino; and the story of the battle in which the British, French, and Russian forces destroyed the Turkish fleet will be told in lively detail, the name of the British commander, Admiral Codrington, assuming an odd alien form in the process. Of their classical history they speak with equal pride. The country people look with innocent awe at the monuments of the classical and the preclassical age.

"Look how heavy the stones are, like great rocks! And how they are carved! Holy Virgin, how fine they are, how beautiful!"

The men are all, of course, keen amateur archaeologists. Sixty or seventy years ago the practice of digging up classical tombs and selling the swag was, it seems, common; today the Archaeological Department of the Ministry of Education is responsible for all digging for antiques. Before the war there were in Athens five foreign institutes concerned with the study of archaeology: American, British, German, French, Italian. Each was allowed a maximum of three permits a year for excavation; each country, that is to say, might dig at three separate sites, with the condition that all finds were handed over to the Greek authorities, the excavators retaining the right of publishing their results. Excavations were, naturally, conducted also by Greek archaeologists, so that in the last fifteen years or so the number of sites left unexplored has been steadily diminished. But

still the peasant digging in his olive-grove or his vineyard may hit on a sarcophagus, or a small bronze, or even a piece of marble sculpture. And it is not many years since some fishermen, pulling in their nets off Artemision in Euboea, found they had caught a rare and heavy fish: a bronze statue of Zeus.

For modern Greece ancient Greece exists as a kind of background, unobtrusive sometimes, occasionally insistent, never without its influence on men's thoughts and actions. Against this background the life of the countryside flows on, rhythmic, measured, tranquil. In autumn and in spring the earth is sown. Already in May in the lowlands the corn is yellow, and men and women, girls and boys, reap the fields. If they have far to go from the village, they may camp out for days. In the summers when the British School was excavating the Heraeum of Perachora on the point opposite Corinth, we would sometimes hear voices at dusk murmuring in the fields behind our tents: a family from the village six miles away, tethering the mules, and lighting a fire, and settling down to sleep. The corn is threshed on the circular stone threshing-floors beside the fields; the Greeks give to these threshing-floors the name that they give also to a halo round the moon. The sheaves are strewn thickly over the floor, a pair of mules are harnessed and driven round and round it; behind them, like a surf-rider, bumps the driver, poised on his foothold. Sometimes a woman takes charge; and then, perhaps, a tiny child will be whirled round, standing between her ankles and gripping her bare legs.

Winnowing time, too, has a strange pacific charm. I

recall days in Crete, days in June when the north wind blew cool from the sea; at the threshing-floors men and women stood with broad, flat wooden forks, tossing the grain into the air and watching the chaff whirled away in clouds and eddies. Behind them, stacks of golden corn; a group of mules standing idle in the sun; and above the sound of voices, pawing hooves, dogs barking, and children shrilling to one another as they ran on bare feet, a steady, intense, piercing sound: the noise of the cicadas screeching ecstatically in the heat from every olive-tree, every pine. A flock of sheep moved over a field reaped and gleaned bare; with them a little boy, playing, not the reed pipe which is often played by shepherd boys on the mainland, but the bagpipes.

"Where did you get your bagpipes?"

"I made them; look, it is the skin of a pig; here are the legs still."

"Will it play any other tune?"

"Of course." And the child played once more, and then again and yet again, the mournful little phrase which had piped in our ears all day.

In summer the shepherds sometimes lead the flocks into the hills; their solitary, nomad life takes them far in search of pasture, from the plains into the mountains in the heat, back to the lowlands again in the winter; a man may drive his sheep twice a year across the Isthmus of Corinth to find first high, then sheltered ground. By the middle of May the snow on all but the highest mountains of Greece has melted; streaks lie here and there on the crests of Parnassos and Ghiona, but the deep snows have gone; only the climber finds drifts caught, even in June

and July, in the hollows of Kyllene, perhaps, or Taygetos, or Chelmos. The hardy sheep of Greece and the wayward, neat-footed goats clamber through the spring and the summer over the high mountain-sides; scattered over terrifying slopes, they crop the thin herbs, and move delicately on, and crop again; from the opposite heights or from the valleys their bells sound like running water. The shepherds, tough, self-reliant old men, wary, handsome, friendly young men, wear, most of them, fustanella and white woollen hooded coat; as they lean on their crooks to talk to the stranger their eyes have the gravity and the fierce brightness of those accustomed to look into great distances. With their sheep, their goats, and their shaggy dogs, which are ferocious enough to keep off the rare wolves and suspicious enough to attack any passer-by, they live for weeks alone, lighting fires at night and gathering the flocks into a fold built of branches. Solitude has made them hospitable, and the stranger will be offered any food and drink they have, even though it may be nothing more than a cup of sheep's milk, still warm. In Macedonia and the mountains of the Pindus range and the Parnassos massif, the shepherds are often wood-carvers, making for themselves drinking-bowls and decorated crooks, severe and exquisite as the ivories of archaic Greece.

Life in the plains is more gregarious. The villages, groups of whitewashed houses surrounding, usually, a square with a café or two, perhaps a well or a spring where the women come to draw water and wash their clothes, are communities self-contained, self-sufficient almost. Nearly all they need they grow themselves:

their fields give them their black home-baked bread, their groves give olives and oil; from their flocks they have goats' milk cheese, salty and harsh, and fresh sheep's milk cheese, and wool to make into clothes and coverlets. The women may be seen outside their houses, spinning, distaff in hand. Many of them weave, though travelling salesmen have made it easier for the villagers to buy town-made stuffs; and at a village near Tripolis I remember a girl telling me what herbs and flowers must be gathered for the vegetable dyes which are used to colour the coarse fabric of the women's skirts and the men's trousers and shirts: a glowing dark blue they are, fading softly in the sun.

Except for their own bread, and olives, and cheese, eggs and beans and some other vegetables, the country people have few needs. Villages near the sea catch fish; peasants eat meat once a week at the most. And there are many months in the year when neither fish nor meat may be eaten, the months of the long fasts of the Orthodox Church. The peasants keep their fasts strictly, and in Lent even a foreigner may find it difficult to get meat in the country; if he does get it, they watch without surprise or rancour his unorthodox high living. At Easter everyone who can kills his Paschal lamb; the villages on Easter Saturday are full of sad, puny carcases. The people break their fast at midnight; the ceremonial bier has been carried in procession through the streets and the fields, the priest has received it again into the church, and at last, after the chanting and the long wait while every man, woman, and child in the congregation holds a lighted candle, the hour comes.

"Christ is risen!"

"Truly He is risen!"

Now everybody may go home and eat lamb, roasted on a spit over a pan of embers. In the morning the greeting is still not "Good day!", but "Christ is risen!" and the formal response "Truly He is risen!" The breakfast eggs have been hard boiled and dyed red. In well-to-do houses it is the traditional practice to give Easter eggs to callers; in Athenian houses, that is to say, to the baker, the milkman, the gardener, the ice-man, the cook's entire family. One year my husband and I, keeping an insufficiently vigilant eye on the housekeeping, found we had involuntarily given away ninety-six red eggs.

It will be about Easter-time, probably, that the men will be going out to cut the pine-trees. The rhythm of work is strict: the corn to be reaped and threshed, the vines to be trenched and pruned, the grapes to be picked, the olives to be gathered and pressed—at certain seasons of the year it is next to impossible to find labour in the country.

"But Vasili, will Vasili not come to dig this year?"

"He is in the fields, he can't come."

"Yanni, then, the old man?"

"He has gone to the pine-woods."

Every year when the sap rises there is a noise of axes in the pine-woods; men are tapping the trees, cutting gashes in their trunks for the resin to drip out. Sometimes a little tin is tied to the trunk to catch the resin; sometimes the tree is notched so as to make its own receptacle. A good deal of this resin goes into retsinato, the country wine of Greece. The ancients, too, used to

put resin in their wine. It is introduced by smearing the inside of the barrel; as the barrel gets emptier, the flavour grows stronger, and the last of the wine tastes like almost pure turpentine. The peasants find it delicious.

"In our village the wine is good, we put nothing in it, it is very healthy. Over at X. they put I don't know what in it, but here it is pure. We have good water, too, pure and cold."

For in Greece the quality of the water is as much discussed as the quality of the wine; with justice, since the mountain water which flows from the springs amongst the rocks or at the side of the bridle-path has a smoothness and softness unknown in urban civilisation; it tastes almost like cream. The springs are cherished by the people and kept in good order. Between the villages they often serve as milestones: "We have two hours," the muleteer will say, "to the spring, after that we shall go down to the plain." The traveller, too, comes, after a day or two of walking through the breathless forests or climbing the arid mountains of Arcadia, to reckon the journey by, not miles, but springs.

As for the wine, after a certain initial shrinking most foreigners learn to like it. It is excellent on a long walk, excellent with the country food, black bread, black olives, salty cheese; and a country feast is nothing without it. The village people celebrate with joy the great feasts of the Church: Christmas, Easter, the Assumption of the Virgin; they celebrate, too, the saints' days at the nearest shrines, and from all the district round people come to dance at the local feast of St. Nicholas, or St. Marina, or St. John the Evangelist. And they are always

ready, except of course during their long periods of fasting, to make private celebration.

A few years ago a friend and I ran across such a party on the island of Thera. We had been walking all day in the sun: from the harbour town of Phira, high on its cliffs overlooking the crescent bay and the volcanic islet it encloses, to the blinding white monastery on Mount St. Elias, and so to the ancient site; scarcely a tree in the violent landscape, with its pumice-stone precipices, no shade except in the villages and in the shelter of the monastery bell-tower. In the late afternoon we came down to the flat country by the shore and the church whose white domes we had seen from the heights: Perissa.

The church with its flying buttresses, built early last century on the prompting of some peasant's dreams, stands almost alone: a few houses, a few inhabitants. But under the trees outside the walls there was a country party. Visitors, Greeks and foreigners, who had been staying in Phira, were having what in Greek is called a "glendi": in fact, a beano. A lamb had been spitted and roasted whole; the villagers had joined in the fun; everybody had eaten and drunk, and now there was to be singing and dancing and story-telling. Would we sit down and drink with them? said one of the country people. They sat at a long table with their empty glasses, laughing together, or breaking from satisfied silence into a bar or two of a song; the visitors had gone to rest for a little, but they would come back to watch the dancing. It was anybody's party now; there was plenty of time to walk back to Phira, we could all go back together for company. As the sky turned pale with the dusk, the

musicians began to play, in snatches at first, then twanging and piping in brisk rhythm. Somebody sang:

> And in the boat you enter
> I will set golden sails,
> Rose-branches I will strew on the shore,
> Roses on the sand.

Presently people began dancing. In Greek country dances, the dancers hold hands, or hold the ends of a knotted handkerchief, standing in a semi-circle; only the leader performs, leaping and twisting if a man is dancing, stepping and turning primly if it is a woman: the rest trail behind, keeping up a vague general rhythm. A lamp was brought, and in the half-light—lamp-shadows on the table, moon-shadows on the ground under the trees and under the walls—everybody danced and sang, visitors and country people, foreigners and Greeks; everybody drank everybody's health, everybody clinked glasses, and in the general goodwill my friend laboriously exchanged addresses with her neighbour, the village barber, and promised to visit his niece in Athens, a good girl, a dressmaker.

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With such ready and confident friendliness the stranger was received all over Greece; if there were private festivities, he might join in; if there were a public festival, he must take part; if there were a wedding in the village, why, he should be invited. The Greeks have a natural aptitude for communal gaiety. But the occasions are often won with much toil, and the wedding of a daughter may cost a man years of saving. Large families are general

among the peasants; the mortality among young children is considerable, but enough survive the illnesses and the privations of country life for the population to increase steadily in peace-time. The country doctors, living in the small towns or in the villages much after the fashion of the simple people they serve, do what they can to counteract the persisting ignorance of hygiene. Tuberculosis, typhoid, malaria, and, strangely in that dry climate, rheumatism are the chief enemies. Still the peasants rear their families in frugality and affection. They adore their babies, praying only for boys and not girls. Boys can work and earn money to keep their parents in old age. Girls can work, too; but they must be provided with dowries if they are to marry; the better the dowry, the better the marriage, since most weddings in Greece are arranged as in France. A man can wish his enemy no worse luck than to beget a family all daughters; that means a dowry to be found for each, and no money or property brought into the family through the marriage of a son.

The girls, perhaps, feel their traditional bonds, brought up as they are to hard work and subservience; they are shyer than the boys and stand by instinct as well as training a little apart. But in their ultimate reaction to the world outside their own circle, the world which sometimes intrudes in the shape of travellers and visitors, boys and girls, men and women are alike. The stranger is welcomed; and he is welcomed as an equal.

A foreigner travelling in the country is called, in peasant talk, a "lordos", a lord; he is in fact a Lord Byron. He must be helped, his wants must be attended to, as far

as it is possible everything he asks must be done; clearly, they argue, since he is travelling for pleasure, he is a rich man, and the rich have tastes which it is useless to question. Why indeed come to this poor village in the mountains when there are plenty of cities to visit, why travel with a mule when train or car would be so much quicker, why at least not ride the mule when you have hired it, instead of walking and letting the muleteer ride. The lordos must decide for himself, just as he has decided to bring his wife with him instead of letting her stay at home and reap and thresh and mind the house.

But that is as far as the argument goes; for the rest, the lordos is a man to be talked with like anyone else. The more sophisticated among the country people—those who have worked, perhaps, in the small towns or learned from reading or from hearsay—know that in polite society you speak to strangers and acquaintances in the second person plural; only relations and close friends are addressed as "thou". These will call the visitor politely "you", but to the others he is "thou". He is a man to be questioned, as anyone is questioned in simple society, about his country, his family, his profession, the number of his children, and the price of his shoes. The muleteer, unshaven and with patched clothes, no doubt, but with an easy good breeding which urban civilisation cannot match, comes to sit at the table of the traveller and drink with him. Presently, from the groups of villagers standing in the square or sitting in the café, a figure will detach itself; a man who emigrated to America and has come home again; he speaks a little American-English, and is anxious to air it in front of the foreigners. Another man

joins in and another; everybody talks freely, without awkwardness. For these people have the confidence of equality; in Greece democracy is a principle not held in theory but practised by the people. There is no more democratic society than a Greek country community; and even in the towns, where democracy runs the danger of being lost in the economic struggle, there is a readiness of approach between the classes unknown in many Western European cities. The Greeks as a nation have kept their innocence; they are a people who do not recognise that men are born unequal, and the contagion of class as yet has scarcely touched them.

So it is that everywhere in this country of simple and direct and self-respecting men there is the habit of freedom, hospitality, courtesy. The shepherd in the Arcadian village sends a child running to his house to fetch wine for the travellers: they are, he says, his guests since they are strangers in his village. The woman at the solitary cottage on the pass over Taygetos calls to the boy picking cherries to fill his hands and bring them to the passers-by: "Bah," she says, "it is nothing, we have enough." The old muleteer, gnarled, white-headed, an elder of the village, guides the foreign visitors to the summit of Kyllene: it is nearly 8,000 feet high, a long, hard walk even from his mountain village, and he takes a bottle of ouzo to help him climb: "Have some," he says; "you won't know you are going uphill!" Back in the village again, he invites the party to his house: they sit in the neat parlour with the family photographs—the bridal pair, the young soldier in uniform—while the wife hurries with Turkish coffee, spoonfuls of sweetmeat and

glasses of water. "Next year," the old man says, "you must come back, you must stay longer, you must stay in our village a week, two weeks, we will climb all the mountains."

One night the travellers come to a hamlet between Olympia and Kalavryta; this is in the days before the building of the Olympia road, and the hamlet is lost, buried in the hills; the foreigners arrive late and exhausted. There is no inn: very well, then, they will sleep in their sleeping-bags in the fields. But from one of the score or so of cottages a man appears who will help; there is always someone ready to help in Greece. The party sit drowsily over their supper; the *demarch*, the mayor, has gone on a day's journey, and they must wait until he comes back and welcomes them before they sleep. Presently there are voices, lanterns in the darkness; the *demarch* appears, there is friendly talk, clinking of glasses, wishing of healths. Now they may go to their beds on the ground; and beds indeed they find, for their friend has made couches of bracken and brought his own coverlets and laid them in the fields, since they will not sleep in his house. Once more names and addresses are exchanged; and for some years letters pass between London and the hamlet in the Arcadian hills. "Your friend, L——", the Greek signs himself; he writes in English, for he is another of the many who went to America, and came home to see their own country, and could not return because the quota and his papers did not admit him.

From the towns and the villages of Greece figures, courageous, stoic, gay, take shape again in memory. Some of them will have fought in Albania against the

Italians; some in Macedonia and Thrace against the Germans. They wanted only the peace of their mountains and valleys and a just return for their labour; and for those simple things they were willing to leave their fields and villages and take up arms. It will lie heavy on the conscience of the world if they are not rewarded.

CHAPTER VII

THE ISLANDS

The train clattered on from Corinth along the south shore of the Gulf towards Patras. It was the summer of 1927, and the vineyards of the coastal strip of plain were alive with grasshoppers. A plague of grasshoppers: as the train passed they rose in clouds, brightening the dusty air with their scarlet wings. They were everywhere in the Peloponnese that year, hopping in the fields from the Gulf far down to the plain of Kalamata in the south. Every now and then one of them blundered in through the open window of the train. The man in the black suit and the straw boater sitting in the opposite corner of the carriage would pick it up, neatly crush it between his fingers, and throw it out again.

"They eat the vines, they eat the corn, they eat everything," he said.

He returned to watching us once again: a middle-class provincial Greek, dark, a trifle paunchy, flashing gold-filled teeth under his moustache.

"You are German?" he said at last. There were a good many Germans travelling in Greece in those years.

"No, English."

"Ah, English!" He beamed with approbation of our choice of nationality. "It is best to be English."

The train pulled up at a small station, and a little boy

ran along the track with a basket of pale green figs. Our observer bought some and gave us one each.

"You are young?" he said enquiringly.

My husband admitted his age.

"Ah, it is best to be young!" Then, looking from one to the other,

"You are brother and sister?"

"No, married; this is my wife."

"Ah, it is best to be married!"

* * * * *

The encounter is typical of a score of casual meetings in railway trains, in country buses, in cafés in little towns; and the questioner with his curiosity and his genial xenophilism is typical of provincial small business men everywhere in Greece. Something of the charm of travel in that informal country, too, emerges; a kind of receptiveness in every society.

The years between the last war and this were probably the best years there have ever been for the foreign traveller in Greece. It was increasingly practicable to move about the country without discomfort; yet the amenities had not spoilt the simplicities of travel. The trains, for those who wanted them, were reliable, though generally slow, and reasonably comfortable; one or two trains each day on the main lines even had restaurant cars. The main roads were improving every year. When I first began to know Greece to go by car to Sunion, the Cape Colonna of *Childe Harold*, forty miles or so to the south of Athens, was a painful physical experience; and though in summer, when the roads were dry and

hard, it was certainly possible to drive to Delphi or to Sparta, in winter there was a good chance of sticking in the mud on the way at any rate to Delphi. Within a few years these roads had been well built, and between at least the most famous places in Greece it was possible to travel in comfort by either rail or car. At the same time, once off the main routes the visitor found the country inviolate: the bridle-tracks and paths over the mountains used as they had been used for generations, the vast peace of the landscape undisturbed; and he himself could travel, as any milord had travelled for over a century, with pack-mules and muleteers.

The hotels, in what now shows itself to have been merely a pause between two wars, were in about the same stage of improvement as the roads. Athens, of course, has, or had, modern European hotels; at the beginning of the war with Italy they were all taken over as hospitals or for military purposes. In 1926 and 1927 the small provincial towns had some of them inns of engaging simplicity; the traveller hired not a room but a bed, and if he insisted on having a room to himself he might have to hire three beds. They were, as they generally still remained when I was last in Greece, inns with accommodation but no food, except perhaps breakfast; the visitor ate his meals at the local restaurant. This was not the case at such places as Mycenae or Delphi or Olympia. Delphi, in spite of its great fame—sanctuary of Apollo, home of the oracle—remains no more than a village; and villages do not have restaurants. Accommodation, however, had to be found for the hundreds of visitors who came every spring to walk up the Sacred

Way and visit the Museum and drink the water from the Castalian spring. In the hotels of Delphi, therefore, as at Olympia, travellers might eat as well as sleep. But at Sparta (the small modern town was founded a century ago by Otho, first King of Greece) he went out for his dinner; so also at Thebes or New Corinth.

In the small or less-frequented villages there may well be no inn, or none to speak of, and visitors must find accommodation in a house. In Old Corinth, for instance, a charming village at the site of the ancient city, the Director and students of the American School used to stay in the house of their foreman (the excavation of Corinth has for nearly half a century been the prerogative of American archaeologists). Later the School built its own dig-house; but when I first went there in 1926 the Americans were still lodged in the little village house. When there was room enough, members of other archaeological schools might stay there, too; the foreman's wife cooked for the party, and the foreman himself, a deft, self-possessed Corinthian, waited at table.

Three years later, when my husband and a friend and I were walking through the centre of Arcadia, we stayed two nights at a village on the western slopes of Kyllene. We slept in bare-board rooms above the café, not without the company, in the summer nights, of a sprinkling of insect life; with the climate and the old wooden-framed peasant houses this is occasionally inevitable; it is also far more easily endured than people make out. But for meals the inn-keeper bore us off to his own house; his wife cooked for us—baby lamb cutlets and frothy egg-and-lemon soup, the best I have ever tasted—

while he talked to us in American-English and entertained us with his experiences as a soldier in the Great War. This was luxury; country accommodation used often to be of a sterner kind.

Visiting Aegina in 1926, we decided to stay the night at the temple of Aphaia, across the island from the harbour-town. I have not been to Aegina since, but I believe that nowadays it wears a more sophisticated air; then, although the crossing from Piraeus is a matter of only two hours, the island had a remote rustic charm. The walk to the temple takes between two and three hours; on the way a woman ran out from her cottage, picked a bunch of flax-blossom from the patch growing there, and, beaming, thrust it into my hands. The Greeks have a strong feeling for the blossoms which spring so richly from their soil; there is something beyond friendliness towards a stranger in the instinctive courtesy which prompts the simplest people to bring as a gift a handful of wild flowers. Further on the road to the temple we stopped at a wayside café; it was at that time noted for possessing a gramophone; and amid the quiet landscape with its vines and olives the proprietor obliged us with a record of "Tipperary" and "Pack Up Your Troubles".

That was the last reminder of urban amenities. The temple stands on a hill amongst pine-woods; from here come the famous Aeginetan sculptures now in the Munich Glyptothek. It was April when we were there; the dwarf blue irises were already faded on the hillsides, and in the pines the owls hooted all night. Yes, said the temple custodian, we could sleep in his house; and he led us to a little room in the cottage. In the corner a

slab of concrete provided at least a hard-wearing bed; on it were spread a blanket and a sheet. By eight o'clock it was night; the only light came from a small dish of oil with a wick drooping over the edge; nothing for it but to go to bed. Morning seemed long in coming; it was no hardship to get up in the dawn, and eat breakfast out of doors in the raw morning air. At least there was breakfast; tea we had brought with us, and the hard-boiled eggs which are the stand-by of the traveller in Greece. Often enough you may have to start a long day's walk in the mountains on a cup of Turkish coffee and a rusk. A peasant, after all, will begin his day's work on no more and probably less.

Many people when talking of travel in Greece think most of travel in the islands; there, they say, is the true, the unspoilt Greece, there the people are of the purest Greek blood. Aegina and Salamis are islands too nearly enfolded by the mainland to be counted in this category; nor, I think, do the enthusiasts include Euboea, joined as it is to Continental Greece by the swing-bridge over the channel of the Euripos. The chief divisions are the Ionian group, the fertile islands off the west coast which were from the moment of Greece's entry into the war the favourite target of Italian bombers; the Cyclades, the main group of the Aegean, set in a rough circle with Delos at the centre; the Northern Sporades to the north-east of Euboea, with Skyros, burial-place of Rupert Brooke, most visited among them; the Eastern Aegean group, Samothrace, Lemnos, Lesbos, Chios, and Samos; and, isolated to the south, the large island of Crete: Crete, home of the Minoan civilisation elucidated by Sir

Arthur Evans. All these islands are served, in times of peace, by the trading and passenger ships which ply so many times weekly from Athens. But when the Italians invaded Greece the island boats stopped. Occasionally, perhaps, when the exigencies of war demanded it, a convoy used to sail into the Aegean, and then a steamer might call at its old ports. For the rest of the time the islands were cut off from the world. Anyone who knows the Greek islands will understand that this was a serious matter; they live by the exchange of goods, and self-sufficiency is next to impossible. The islanders, a hardy, independent, and resourceful people, therefore kept up their own communications. Caïques and benzinas, small and tiny sailing boats with auxiliary engines, plied between the islands; and this in winter, when storms sweep the Aegean day after day.

In 1926 my husband and I went to Delos. The island, legendary birthplace of Apollo and Artemis, is so shocked by waves and wind that the myth claimed it to be chained only to the floor of the sea. It is not much more than a rock, about three miles long, less than a mile wide at its greatest breadth, with anchorage only for caïques. The island steamers call at Mykonos; from there Delos may be reached by hiring a small boat. Not long ago the Greek Tourist Office, which did much in recent years to improve conditions of travel, built a tiny rest-house where visitors to the island might find rooms; in 1926 it was only by the hospitality of the archaeologists working in Delos that it was possible to stay there. Delos has been, with intervals, the province of French archaeology since 1873; the students and excavators lived in a little

house almost on the sea-shore, attended by a grave, dignified and handsome peasant and his wife. Two French archaeologists were working there in the March of 1926; hsopitality is not easy on a rock provisioned from outside, but we were received with friendliness and invited to stay the night.

In the afternoon, while we were looking at the ancient site with its mournful and noble remains, a wind sprang up; by night it was a gale, and the little boat which had brought us, anchored on the east side of the island, nearly broke its moorings. A boy, one of the crew of three, was still on board. He refused to leave the caïque when the storm came; by morning he was in clear danger. The question was how to get him off. The boat leaped on the waves, the rocks bared dreadful teeth. The people of Delos, a handful only, gathered in consultation. At last it was decided to bring a rowing-boat which was beached on the opposite side of the island. A party of men set off. The rest waited, shouting above the storm to the boy on the leaping ship. Presently, treading carefully on the stony path, the party came back carrying the boat on their shoulders. The moment persists in memory: the wild shore, the sky leaden with storm, and, under the scythe of the wind, the group of rescuers in their rough dark clothes, their faces sad and stoic, their figures set in the eternal mould of grief.

Somehow, by infinite care, resource, resolve, the boy was brought ashore. The storm blew on. All day huge breakers roared from the north down the channel between Delos and the deserted island of Rheneia, half a mile away. They foamed over the Islands of the Current,

the naked rocks which interrupt the channel, and flung themselves on the wind in great jets and fountains and clouds of spray; the air by the shore was full of flying, salty drops. At night the sea was a vast white flurry of foam and waves, a white roaring menace in the dark. Sleeping in the house by the shore, we could feel the shock of the breakers as they crashed on the rocks; the whole night thundered. The wind shrieked without ceasing over the island; men walked leaning on it with all their weight. The world beyond the waves was obliterated. In clear weather from the top of Mount Kynthos—the pointed hill in the middle of the island—one can see the other Cyclades set round in an irregular circle. The storm had pulled down a blind of cloud and humidity between Delos and its ring of attendant islands; we saw nothing but blank grey, sky merging into sea in a single monotony. No ship passed, no signal came from the outside world; we were imprisoned in the storm. Indefatigably courteous, our hosts kept up at meal-times their flow of easy, cultured, faintly sardonic French; we stumbled to reply, unhappily conscious that we were breaking their solitude and, what was worse, eating their dwindling food.

"It seems", said one of them with ironic gallantry, "that we have beans enough to live on for a month."

For five days and nights the north wind blew. On the sixth morning the sky was suddenly clear. Towards Mykonos the sea sparkled once again, and the caïque made ready to carry us back. As we walked across the island to the anchorage we saw that the small flowers which, when we came, had sprung everywhere from the

stony soil, were withered; the deadly wind had blasted them every one.

"Five days", said our hosts, "is nothing out of the way. Last winter we had a storm which lasted for a fortnight. The longest on record, apparently, lasted forty-one days."

* * * * *

Only those who have never travelled in the Eastern Mediterranean think of the Aegean as a calm and friendly sea. Calm it often may be, glittering under a blue sky; but its serene moods alternate with outbursts of ferocity, and even in summer the *meltémia*, the northerly winds which cool the islands and the coasts of the mainland, blow sometimes with the violence of a storm. In tempest weather the island steamers cannot call at the more exposed ports. They have, of course, their regular routes, starting from the Piraeus, whither they sail west through the Corinth Canal to the Ionian Islands, or south-east to the Cyclades. One will call at Seriphos, Siphnos and Melos (where the Venus of Milo was found over a century ago). Another goes to Paros, source of Parian marble, Naxos, Nios, and Thera; another to Mykonos via Syra and Tenos, the pilgrims' island where the *Helle* was sunk by an Italian submarine. The greater number of the Aegean steamers touch at Syra, the real centre of the Cyclades and a flourishing island noted for its manufacture of Turkish delight. But in storms their timetables are upset; an island will be missed out altogether and will have to wait for the next round. Most islands used to have two boats a week at least. The islanders

accept it as a matter of course when the steamer fails to call. The traveller from Western Europe, accustomed to precise hours, regular services, finds himself suddenly helpless.

"When do you think the steamer will call? Will it come today?"

"Eh, today we have a sea; I don't think it will come today. Tomorrow, perhaps, if the wind drops."

In times of peace, then, the islands of the Aegean have difficulties enough in communicating with one another and with the mainland. With the outbreak of war the difficulties were multiplied by a hundred. There was always the danger of Italian submarines; in any case, the ships were needed for other purposes than island trade and passenger traffic. And so, as I have said, the islands were left to fend for themselves. Anyone who has travelled by caïque or benzina in the archipelago will understand at what expense of courage and determination they have clung to their lines of communication. Anyone also who has made acquaintance with the island people will understand that tenacity and self-dependence are traditional among them, and that in the winter of 1940–1 they were doing no more than practising the virtues learned in generations of industry and daily adventure.

The island boats will sail again some day; it is not easy to believe that they have ever stopped. Or their successors will sail. Now that the bombers have done their work, how many of the brave ships one remembers are still afloat? A resourceful, gallant, never-say-die company they were; former British ships, many of them,

assuming in their new duties names alien from the shipyards of Clyde and Mersey, visiting, too, harbours remote from their first intention: Crete, where Theseus sailed to kill the Minotaur in his labyrinth; Ithaca, home of Odysseus. Even to the traveller with no liking for the sea there has always been something strangely romantic in their voyages. The very hour of their sailing was romantic. Island boats used to sail from Piraeus in the evening, generally about seven or eight o'clock; in summer they thus left harbour amid the rumour of the end of the day and under the clear glowing sky of sunset.

Since those days the harbour has been shattered by German bombs. But I can think of Piraeus only as the busy, noisy, casual Mediterranean port, alive with the excitement not of war but of peace. It is the hour for sailing; round the broad gangway running from the quay to the stern of the boat there is a confused crowd: porters with suitcases and tin trunks and baskets, passengers fighting their way behind them, people going on board, people coming ashore, peddlers, sailors, stewards, people shouting, people hurrying, everybody intent, preoccupied, active. On the decks, hurly-burly. First-class passengers searching for the stewards and the way to their cabins; second-class passengers, less confident, trying to find the way for themselves; third-class passengers, with the patience of the poor, setting down their bundles and rugs in corners and passages and composing themselves for the long discomfort of the night. On the first-class deck a man wanders with a basket of pistachio-nuts in paper bags; another is selling cigarettes and boxes of

Turkish delight, dawdling until the siren warns him to go ashore.

With much to-do, clanking, whistling, blowing, a ship detaches herself from the shore and slides away towards the channel for the sea; her decks are as crowded as a troopship's; one deciphers the delicate name: Nausicaa. Presently we shall follow her between the anchored cargo-boats; already the siren has given its ear-splitting blast, already the soft steady throbbing of the engines can be felt under our feet. As we, too, slide away towards the harbour entrance where the signal winks on the mole, Piraeus puts on its blue and twilight look; lights come out in the shops and hotels and houses, the garrulous quayside grows mysterious as it recedes, the sadness of evening, departure, outgoing ships envelops the matter-of-fact streets and industrial buildings of the port. Soon Piraeus and Athens and the mountains behind will be no more than an indistinct mass between the darkness of sea and the darkness of sky; the ship lunges south-east, rounds Cape Colonna, where the columns of the Sunion temple still serve as a landmark to sailors, and so comes into the Aegean.

On the decks, a confused community of seated and prostrate figures. The first- and second-class passengers dine in the saloon. In Greek steamers the traveller pays for his berth and for his meals separately; dinner, served at long tables, is a heavyish meal at which white local wine is given free. Everyone sits late on deck; in summer the cabins hold the heat of the day through the darkness, and some people sleep in deck-chairs. The third-class passengers in any case sleep on their deck in the hot

weather. In the narrow passages beside engine-room and galley, on the tarpaulins over the hatchways, in every corner sheltered from the wind they lie; walking along the lower deck, you pick your way between rows of still, shrouded figures. With the patient resource of the poor in Greece, they have come provided for every need: their own food, their own drink, and their own bedding; with perfect disregard of the lucky and the wealthy dining grandly and lying in comfort, they have disposed themselves for the night; now they sleep, and they will scarcely stir, unless the business of the cargo insists, when the ship touches in the night at some island port.

Syra, the busiest port of call, is about eight hours from Piraeus, so that on the outward voyage, unless a nearer island is visited, they will not be disturbed until early in the morning. But on the return voyage the night may be broken several times. The sleeper wakes at the sound of voices; sailors are calling to one another, hatches are being opened, the gangway swings down the side of the ship; he opens his eyes, sits up, leans on his elbow, to see a swarm of lights wheeling slowly by; with a grating rattle the anchor is dropped, and the lights stand still. There, beyond the smooth harbour water, is an island port, awake and active even at this hour: lights on the quay, groups of figures running to and fro in the shadow, boats putting out from the steps at the water's edge. The mad irregular clanking of the donkey-engine begins, lights glare on the deck; the sleeper, huddled in his corner, pulls his coat over his eyes and waits for silence and darkness again.

Sometimes there is an air of conspiracy about the

whole affair. The anchor is dropped; the siren hoots, echo rolls the sound from hill to hill behind the harbour; then silence. The sleeper, roused more by mystery than by all the clatter of the last port, unrolls himself, rubs his eyes, goes stiffly to the rail. Across the harbour water comes a solitary rowing boat. A man paddles it, pulling with short strokes; another stands up in the bows. The boat carries a pile of wooden crates and an indistinguishable round object; the oars make a soft liquid sound in the water. There is a muffled shout from the lower deck. The boat approaches slowly, stealthily. From the deck a rope with a hook is lowered, one of the wooden crates is attached and hauled up, then another and another. The two men in the boat stand up to attach the hook and steady the load; last, up comes the indistinguishable round object. There is an exchange of shouts, still muffled; the men sit down on the thwarts; the boat turns, pulls away from the side of the ship, and moves slowly into darkness. The steamer hoots again; again echo repeats the sound, eerie in the thick silence; still with its conspiratorial air, the steamer backs, swings round, makes off. Curious, the watcher goes to examine the indistinguishable round object. It is a wicker basket of fruit, perhaps, or vegetables; tied to its lid, waving pincers and antennae in measured protest, are two justly indignant lobsters.

By morning on the outward voyage the crowds on the deck will have thinned, for the harbour towns of the night have claimed some of the passengers. To disembark at night, indeed, can be a lovely fantasia. At Siphnos, for instance, there used to be a boat arriving at two

o'clock in the morning; when I went there Gerard Young, later Director of the British School, was excavating at the Kastro, site of the ancient acropolis. The Kastro is on the opposite side of the island from the harbour where the steamer anchors; we set off on the walk there and then; the whitewashed chapels on the hillsides, the houses in the villages glittered like snow, and the landscape was bewitched with moonlight. Morning arrival gives the harbour towns of the Cyclades a less fantastic air.

The architecture of these Aegean islands has a character distinct from that of the Greek mainland. On the mainland the village houses, though they are more often whitewashed than not, have no uniformity of colour; some may be washed with pink, some betray the mud-brick of which they are built; some are roofed with red semi-circular tiles; the mountain villages of Arcadia, Dimitsana, Karytaina, Andritsaina, have balconied stone houses. In the best of the Cyclades the houses are all white. From the sea the harbour-towns are exquisite arrangements of little white cubes: now set in orderly geometrical groups, now climbing the hills in delicate diagonals and recessions; everywhere clear angles, brilliant flat surfaces, sharp blue shadows. Nearer at hand, the houses are seen to be themselves composed of cubes. They are all flat-roofed; sometimes a little rectangular terrace, with a flight of rectangular steps, is added; the stairs, white and solid, to the first floor are always outside the house, as if each were to be approached only by a stairway cut from the fabric of the building itself. The style of architecture, one is told, is the result of the history of the Aegean islands: islands always solitary,

with protectors far off, exposed always to the dangers of pirates and sea-raiders; houses built in this way gave more safety and could be better defended. The Cyclades, having achieved an individual manner of building, fortunately knew better than to abandon it; and in Mykonos, the most visited and one of the prettiest of them, there were strict regulations governing new building and preventing any offence against the uniformity of the harbour town.

The wind which whips the Aegean Sea has its effect also on the islands, and the Cyclades are almost treeless. Some of them have windmills on their cliffs and the slopes of their hills; many of these windmills are no longer used, but remain as a kind of decorative emblem. As well as their own architecture, the islands of the Aegean have their own domestic crafts. Though spinning and weaving are still practised by the country women of Greece, the lively embroidery which they once produced now belongs to the past; contemporary peasant embroidery is mostly crude and garish. But island embroidery is still famous among collectors of the fine pieces of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. From the Greeks of Asia Minor came much lovely work; Epirus had its individual styles, and Macedonia too is the source of superbly worked dresses and coats passed on from generation to generation. But the islands have produced the majority of the famous types of Greek embroidery: Skyros, Naxos, Crete, Kos, Rhodes, Patmos (for though Kos, Rhodes and Patmos, refuge of St. John the Evangelist, are now in Italian hands, they are, like the rest of the Dodecanese, by tradition and population

Greek). Skyros embroidery has a style recognisable by the most unobservant amateur. Much Greek embroidery is purely decorative and abstract, a complex of floral or geometrical motives repeated in a brilliant pattern of reds and blues and greens and yellows, the quality of the colours being of course due to the use of vegetable dyes. Skyros embroidery is apt to be more representational; its motives are birds or ships rendered with a bewitching mixture of precision and fantasy. The cock which decorates the material has a red crest and red wattles and the right number of claws; but its tail-feathers spread into a plant with crimson and yellow flowers, from its breast sprouts a wild arabesque of stalks and leaves and stamened blossom, and the feet themselves branch into an extravagance of buds and tendrils. The fantasy of the individual worker may vary; the basis of the style never. Island embroidery is an instance of folk-art: a tradition of execution passing from generation to generation of simple women, each contributing technical skill and an elaboration, perhaps, of a basic form, but none breaking away from the rigid frame of tradition. Superstition even creeps in. Sometimes a pattern will have a tiny irregularity: a motive will be wrongly repeated, a wrong colour will be introduced, a detail will be left unfinished. This, they say, is not carelessness; it is done on purpose, lest the perfection of the work should call down the envy and malice of the gods. Superstition of the same kind makes a peasant woman today frightened for her children; if they are admired, the Evil Eye may light on them.

The causes for the decline of this art on the Greek

mainland and in the islands are the business of the historian. In the islands more than in some parts of the mainland the tradition of domestic pride remains. The houses of Skyros, for instance, are a model of cleanliness, order, good taste. The town is built on a precipitous hill; a little below its highest point, on a bastion of rock looking out to sea, is the Rupert Brooke memorial, the work of one of the best-known contemporary Greek sculptors. The centre of the town is reached by streets which are almost stairways; between the houses, narrow passages wind and climb. In summer as you walk by you may look in to the main rooms; house-proud, the women invite you in for a better look. Huge recessed open fireplaces, whitewashed platforms serving as beds and tables; bright cushions, shining copper pans hanging on the walls, carved wooden chairs and chests, and, among the native decorations, an array of alien pottery, even some blue-and-white English china, brought back from distant voyages by the Skyros sailors of the past. Everywhere the evidence of hard work and self-respect; everywhere, if only in these alien tokens, the evidence of the sea.

I repeat that Greece is a peasant country, that one is conscious always, behind the life of the towns, of the agricultural life which maintains them. Greece is also a maritime country. It cannot be too strongly emphasised how deep has been the influence of the sea upon the history of the country and the character of the people. The Greeks know both the dangers and the gifts of the sea; threatened by it, ringed round by its storms, they have learned how to harness and use it. In a country

where communications are few and difficult and where mountain ranges divide province from province, town from town, the channels of salt water have served where roads were lacking.

The life of the islands has always depended on these salt-water channels, and in the islands, naturally, it is that the influence of the sea is most obvious. But on the mainland, too, there is little escape from the consciousness of its presence. In the upland plains of Arcadia in the middle of the Peloponnese men may ignore it. But it is always there, waiting the moment to assert itself; from the mountain path, through the gap in the hills, there is the line of its blue horizon. Sometimes it is a besieging force; an island may become for the time being a prison. Sometimes it is a force keeping open the ways of communication; a headland may be more easily visited by boat than by the rough bridle-track, to sail across the bay is easier than to ride round it.

Most often it offers the line of supply. I speak not of the islands only, but of the coasts of Continental and Peninsular Greece as well. A great part of the internal trade of the country is carried by sea. Little ships bear the produce of the land from port to port: olives from Patras, figs and oranges from Kalamata, cotton and tobacco from Nauplion, oil from Gytheion. Along the coasts, up and down the Gulf of Corinth, the caïques go with fodder, charcoal, gravel; wherever there is anchorage, the little ships moor, wherever there is produce to carry they will load it. In every big harbour there is the quay of the caïques; their noble lines, bright stripes of colour and fine rigging bring an air of daring and

adventure into the hugger-mugger of commerce. And on every stretch of water within sight of Greece in times of peace there are Greek ships—steamers trailing their faint scarves of smoke, caïques and benzinas moving with a dull throb of engines. Sometimes when a wind springs up without warning the little ships are taken unawares; then nothing more touching than to see them fly for shelter through seas as ferociously playful as a cat with a mouse. Yet it is not often that one hears of a ship lost; the Greeks are sailors skilled and brave without foolhardiness.

The people of coast and island begin their apprenticeship to the sea early. All over Greece the children take a part in the serious affairs of daily life; little boys and girls take the sheep and goats to pasture, fetch and carry food and water, manage the mules and donkeys. The boys play in the intervals, the girls not so often. For the children of the seashore the distinction between work and play is less clear. The boys, shaven-headed and barefoot, scamper on the rocks and scrabble in the pools for shellfish; delightfully soon, they learn to manage a tiny boat, to fish and go octopus-hunting. It takes two to catch an octopus: one to paddle the boat, one to search the water through a glass-bottomed cylinder and handle the trident. The creature, when it has been speared, is beaten persistently on a rock; nothing will shake the Greeks in their belief that the process makes this bit of marine indiarubber tender.

Fishing is done mostly by dragnets; where there is a beach the net is hauled in to the shore; or it is hauled to a fishing-boat. At evening the gri-gri boats go out: a

group of tiny boats, each with a big acetylene lamp, the whole line drawn by a benzina. With their lamps alight they wait through the dark; the fish, pleased by the flame, crowd into the nets. From a distance in the night the row of lamps might be the lights of a little port, and from the Heraeum of Perachora, when the British School was camped there to excavate, we used often to notice what seemed to be a strange village on the coast west of Corinth. The war, no doubt, will have put a stop to the gri-gri boats, and until it is won there will be no more brightly lit villages, real or illusory, along the coasts of the mainland and the islands.

Dynamiting for fish is illegal in Greek waters. A few years ago it was still practised secretly in the more remote gulfs, but it was decreasing: luckily, since it ruins the fishing-grounds by indiscriminately destroying the young fish. The system is simple: a bit of dynamite is wrapped in paper, a fuse is set and lighted, and when the paper is just catching fire it is bowled into the sea. If it is thrown too soon the explosion may fail; if too late, it blows the man's hand off. The dynamiters of the lawless days were resolute fellows, and there are stories of men with their right hands blown off, still throwing dynamite with their left. In Crete, the legend said, a man had lost both his hands; not to be discouraged by trifles, he threw the dynamite with his feet.

The catch of the gri-gri boats may be collected by a caïque which goes the rounds of far bays and inlets. From Perachora we used to see the caïque which came daily from Loutraki in the eastern corner of the Gulf of Corinth. Early every morning it rounded the Heraeum

point and vanished into the Halcyonic Gulf, every afternoon it came back with its cargo of fish neatly packed with ice in wooden chests. Sometimes the lighthousemen from the lighthouse on the point would hail it and buy fish for us. Without cease the traffic of the coasts went on. The seafaring men are rough, hardy and jovial; their trade is dangerous, and they accept the danger without emotion, going about their business nonchalantly and efficiently; in hours of relaxation, sitting in a café drinking and smoking, they tell sailors' stories and laugh with the gusto of simple and vigorous people.

The last time I went to the Heraeum of Perachora I was alone and walking; one of the lighthouse men rowed out into the Gulf and hailed a passing caïque: would they give me a lift to the Corinth Canal? The ship was loaded high with fodder; I climbed on to the top of the load and sat down. The captain joined me: would I like some coffee? A cigarette perhaps? He would ask only that I should be careful when throwing away the end not to set fire to the cargo. This was a young and go-ahead captain, not like some of the grizzled, hoarse old masters of ships; he talked about the young girl in Piraeus whom he wanted to marry, he spoke of his ambition to own a line of caïques. But underneath the veneer of sophistication he was no different from all the others. He was a man on his own, with a confidence born of a life in which hardihood counts. For in Greece, as I suppose everywhere among sea-going people, the harsh demands of the sea have called out an answering toughness; and danger and distance have bound men together. The lighthouse men on lonely headlands and islands, the people

of fishing ports and trading harbours, know the sailors who anchor and pass on their occasions, and a kind of community of the people of the coast has come into being. The British, an island people, should recognise the qualities which sea and storm have fostered in the Greeks. Whenever the two peoples have met they have understood one another readily: never better than in this war; and Greece at least is a country where the popularity of the British has not been a myth.

The maritime aptitude of the Greeks is nothing new in their history. Since ancient times they have been seafarers; and the classical Greeks were colonisers as well as sea-traders. Today, too, their sea-borne trade has reached far outside their own waters. Greece is a small country, with, except for Bulgaria and Albania, the smallest population of the South-eastern European States as they were before war changed their boundaries. But she had built up the largest merchant fleet of any Mediterranean country except France and Italy; it ranked in fact ninth among the maritime countries of the whole world.*

The Greeks in the century of their independence have shown an enterprise wanting in many nations with greater resources. They used their soil to grow the Mediterranean crops for which it is best suited, believing that a better standard of living might be reached by exporting these and importing certain necessities than by sacrificing exports in an attempt at self-sufficiency; it was not their fault if economic conditions in the outside world thwarted the plan and drove them, like other

* In 1938 Greece, with a population of 7,107,000, had a gross merchant tonnage of 1,889,000.

European nations, in upon themselves. The geographical features of their country—its islands and deep gulfs, the insistent presence of the sea—had taught them a lesson, the lesson of communication by water. The lesson had served them well in the past, now they turned it once more to good account; they bought up old steamships from other countries, for their own waters they laid down their own strong sailing-ships (and fitted them, in time, with engines); rapidly they became owners of a large and flourishing merchant fleet. Unlike the British, they were not an industrial people; but like the British, they were a trading people, depending for their livelihood on the movement of goods. In a world sane and at peace they might have prospered without detriment to other nations. They had energy and self-confidence; they believed in themselves as a Mediterranean Power; they had qualities of ironic humour and tenacity not negligible in a young and growing nation. For in some strange way the Greeks were a young nation, despite their ancient history; perhaps one should say rather, an old nation reborn.

But they were not to be left to work out their national economy. After their miraculous recovery from the disaster of the Asia Minor campaign, the world depression struck them just when they might have become completely re-established. Yet they were not overthrown; they made, indeed, a more successful attempt than most at holding their own. Their geographical situation and the general movement of trade set them in the orbit of the Nazi economy. They did not allow their commercial relations to undermine their political independence; in the last resort they were ready to sacrifice everything else

to preserve it. From the confusion of war they emerge as a responsible people, conscious of their part in the shaping of Europe. Few nations so far have come out of this war with reputations higher than those they took in. Greece at least has won honours which nothing, not the destruction of her cities nor the massacre of her people, can take from her as long as there are free men left living in the world.

CHAPTER VIII

THE STORY OF FREE MEN

"ALTHOUGH the Greek armies had been mobilised almost continuously for ten years, they seemed at this time [1919] to be the only troops who would go anywhere or do anything." The words are Mr. Winston Churchill's; they were written in 1929, when statesmen still looked back to an old war; during, in fact, "that period of Exhaustion which has been described as Peace." The alacrity of the Greek armies to act, during the months of delay and confusion in the Middle East after the armistice, has been touched on earlier in these pages: the landing at Smyrna encouraged by the Great Powers, the overthrow of Venizelos and the withdrawal of Allied support, and the terrible unfolding of the Asia Minor tragedy. I have tried also to show how tragedy was changed to advantage; how by the absorption of the vast influx of refugees from Turkey Greece was in the long run not weakened but strengthened, how the ancient antagonism between the two nations was at last overcome and converted into friendship. What I should like to point to now is another side of the story: not the aptitude of the Greeks for recovery after disaster, but their qualities of tenacity and endurance in war itself.

"Mobilised almost continuously for ten years"; combatants in three wars, the First and Second Balkan Wars

and the Great War: still the Greeks were ready to go on. There has been too common a tendency in this country to forget, in the stupor of exhaustion-peace, the military achievements of Greece in her struggle for reintegration. The months since October, 1940, have reminded the world that there is no more stubborn fighter than a Greek, no Ally more reliable in the dangerous hour. Speakers and writers in this country who up to then had regarded the modern Greeks as a people quite different from the ancients, began to talk about the great tradition of Greece with a rush of references to the Persian Wars; suddenly there were practically eyewitness stories of Marathon, Thermopylae and Salamis. It will not be irrelevant at this point to look back nearly 2,500 years, and to see just what were the events which have served the world as example ever since.

In the middle of the sixth century B.C. the Persians under Cyrus conquered Lydia, central province of the west of Asia Minor, the district in which Smyrna lies. There were flourishing Greek colonies on the west coast of Asia Minor: soon these were swallowed up in the great new Persian Empire. The colonists were mostly Ionians, that is to say of the same race as the Athenians; disliking the Persian rule, in 500 B.C. they revolted, and called the Greeks of the mainland to help them. The Lacedaemonians or Spartans, leaders of the Dorians, the other of the chief races of ancient Greece, were not to be persuaded; the Athenians, however, and the Eretrians mustered a fleet and sailed off to Miletus. Sardis, capital of Lydia, was burned; and though the Athenians afterwards withdrew and the Ionian revolt was crushed, Darius the Great

King, as he modestly styled himself, never forgot their intervention.

"It is said that he no sooner understood what had happened, than, laying aside all thought concerning the Ionians, who would, he was sure, pay dear for their rebellion, he asked, 'Who the Athenians were?' and, being informed, called for his bow, and placing an arrow on the string, shot upwards into the sky, saying, as he let fly the shaft—'Grant me, Jupiter, to revenge myself on the Athenians!' After this speech, he bade one of his servants every day, when his dinner was spread, three times repeat these words to him—'Master, remember the Athenians.'"

The anecdote is from Herodotus, who is the chief source of our knowledge of the Persian Wars. Critical examination of the great History is the business of scholars and archaeologists; for the present purpose we can do no better than follow his story.

The Great King remembered the Athenians, and in the year 492 sent an expedition against Greece. The land force crossed the Hellespont (that is, the Dardanelles) and made for Macedonia, with the intention of moving south on Athens and Eretria; the accompanying fleet began to move south too and tried to double Mount Athos.

"But here a violent north wind sprang up, against which nothing could contend, and handled a large number of the ships with much rudeness, shattering them and driving them aground upon Athos. 'Tis said the number of the ships destroyed was little short of three hundred; and the men who perished were more than twenty

thousand. For the sea about Athos abounds in monsters beyond all others; and so a portion were seized and devoured by those animals, while others were dashed violently against the rocks; some, who did not know how to swim, were engulfed; and some died of the cold."

So much for the fleet. The army, meanwhile, was having trouble with a local tribe which, though subdued, gave the Persians some hard knocks; and after the disaster off Athos they were glad enough to retire to Asia for that year at least. The Great King went on remembering the Athenians.

In 490 B.C. fresh forces, with fresh commanders, were despatched with instructions "to carry Athens and Eretria away captive, and to bring the prisoners into his presence". This time the troops and their horses were embarked, and sailed across the Aegean to Naxos, where they burned town and temples; to Delos, which they prudently spared since it was the birthplace of Apollo and Artemis; and to Euboea, where they plundered Eretria and carried away its inhabitants. They then crossed the strait between Euboea and the mainland and landed at Marathon: on the opposite shore of Attica, that is, from Athens, and about twenty-six miles away.

To appreciate the rest of the story it is necessary to consider the nature of the opposing forces. On one side the Persians, masters of Babylon and Egypt, with an Empire stretching from Macedonia to the Indus, the greatest Power in the known world; on the other side the Greeks, a people inhabiting a small mountainous country and grouped in City States constantly at war with one

another. Not even, at this crisis of history, all the Greeks; not by any means all the Greeks. Of the famous City States, in fact, only the Athenians; with them, the people of Plataea in Boeotia, who had some years earlier put themselves under the protection of Athens; no one else. Nevertheless the Athenians marched out of their city and took up their positions at Marathon. Before they went they sent a runner, by name Pheidippides, to Sparta, 140 miles away. He reached it "the very next day", and besought the Lacedaemonians not to allow Athens to be enslaved by the barbarians; the Lacedaemonians, however, could not march when the moon had not reached the full. "So they waited for the full of the moon"; and the men of Athens and Plataea fought alone.

"So when the battle was set in array, and the victims showed themselves favourable, instantly the Athenians, so soon as they were let go, charged the barbarians at a run. Now the distance between the two armies was little short of eight furlongs. The Persians, therefore, when they saw the Greeks coming on at speed, made ready to receive them, although it seemed to them that the Athenians were bereft of their senses, and bent upon their own destruction; for they saw a mere handful of men coming on at a run without either horsemen or archers. Such was the opinion of the barbarians; but the Athenians in close array fell upon them, and fought in a manner worthy of being recorded. . . . The two armies fought together on the plain of Marathon for a length of time; and in the mid battle, where the Persians themselves and the Sacae had their place, the barbarians were victorious, and broke and pursued the Greeks into the inner country;

but on the two wings the Athenians and the Plataeans defeated the enemy. Having so done, they suffered the routed barbarians to fly at their ease, and joining the two wings in one, fell upon those who had broken their own centre, and fought and conquered them. These likewise fled, and now the Athenians hung upon the runaways and cut them down, chasing them all the way to the shore, on reaching which they laid hold of the ships and called aloud for fire."

With what was left of their ships the Persians made off and sailed round Sunion (Cape Colonna) towards Athens. The Athenians, however, were too quick for them; they made a hurried march back to the city and arrived before the enemy, who, after resting on their oars a little, took themselves back to Asia. The Persians, with an army estimated at over 40,000, had lost, according to Herodotus, 6,400 men, the Greeks with perhaps 10,000 had lost 192. The First Persian War was over. For the time being the small, disunited country had beaten off the huge, wealthy, organised Empire. Ten years later a far more magnificent expedition was to be sent against them; and again the small people fighting for their liberties were to discomfit the invaders.

In 485 B.C. Darius died, having been distracted by a revolt in Egypt from immediate revenge on the Athenians. He was succeeded by his son Xerxes, who was persuaded to undertake the subjugation of Greece. He took, says Herodotus, four years to prepare the expedition. Remembering the naval disaster off Mount Athos, he had a canal cut across the isthmus which joins the mountain to the mainland, so that his ships might go through; he also

built two bridges over the Hellespont so that his armies might walk and ride over. In the winter of 481 B.C. the King began his march; he wintered at Sardis, then moved on in terrible magnificence towards the Hellespont and Europe. From the European side, says Herodotus, he watched his troops crossing over under the lash; the crossing took seven days and seven nights. The Immortals, the picked Ten Thousand Persians, went garlanded and glittering with gold; after them Assyrians and Egyptians, Scyths and Indians, Ethiopians, Arabians on camels, Libyans in chariots, men of Asia Minor, men from the shores of the Caspian Sea. Escorting them went a vast fleet. Herodotus says there were over two and a half million fighting men and as many more of camp-followers and provision-ship crews; more conservative historians have reduced the number of combatants to about half a million. Elaborately threatening, the Persian expedition moved across Thrace and south through Greece; as they went they drank the rivers dry and, like a German army of occupation, ate the people's food. There was no opposition. On the march many people made submission to the King; those not yet in danger were reluctant to expose themselves to it by joining in resistance.

To their eternal credit, the Athenians stood firm. The oracle at Delphi promised them every kind of catastrophe; then, being besought a second time, made ambiguous but slightly less despondent remarks about a "wooden wall". The Athenians, urged by Themistocles, decided that this was a reference to their fleet, which they promptly set to work to enlarge. "If a man should now say that the Athenians were the saviours of Greece, he would not

exceed the truth. . . . They had the courage to remain faithful to their land, and await the coming of the foe." And so it happened that the two chief powers of Greece, the Athenians, the maritime power, and the Spartans, the land power, were united against the invader. Refused by several states, they still managed to rally a fairly representative body of Greeks; and it was decided to make a stand at Thermopylae, while the fleet proceeded to Artemision, a point on the north of Euboea, to keep in touch with the army.

Now for the first time the Greeks had luck. A storm came up and destroyed part of the Persian fleet which was keeping pace with the army; fifteen other ships were taken by the Greeks, lying in wait at Artemision. On land things were not going so well. A small force only had reached Thermopylae; the Spartans were waiting, not this time for the full moon, but for a local festival, while the rest of the allies were taken up with the Olympic festival; only advanced guards had been sent, and these must now face the whole onrush of the Persian army. Leonidas, King of Sparta, who had come with three hundred Spartans and about seven thousand other Greeks, decided, however, to try to hold off the enemy.

Thermopylae is a strategic pass leading from Thessaly into Locris and so to Boeotia and Attica. It lies on what is now the Gulf of Lamia; to one side of it is Mount Oeta, descending in cliffs; to the other, a morass and the Gulf. Today the character of the pass has changed; the streams which flow into the Gulf have carried down large deposits of earth, and the sea has been pushed back for several miles, so that between the cliffs and the water's

edge there is now a fairly wide tract of marshy plain. But when Herodotus wrote the cliffs ran close to the sea, and at two points there was room only for a single carriage.

The Persians pitched their camp before the pass, in the wide part of the coastal strip; the Greeks took up their positions in the strait, prepared to make their stand at the second of the narrow points where a wall had been built across. Xerxes had advanced so far without difficulty; on his way he had heard that "a few men were assembled at this place", and now he sent a mounted spy to see how many they were and what they were at.

"The horseman rode up to the camp, and looked about him, but did not see the whole army; for such as were on the further side of the wall (which had been rebuilt and was now carefully guarded) it was not possible for him to behold; but he observed those on the outside, who were encamped in front of the rampart. It chanced that at this time the Lacedaemonians held the outer guard, and were seen by the spy, some of them engaged in gymnastic exercises, others combing their long hair. At this the spy greatly marvelled, but he counted their number, and when he had taken accurate note of everything he rode back quietly; for no one pursued after him, nor paid any heed to his visit. So he returned, and told Xerxes all that he had seen."

The King, unaccustomed to Spartan nonchalance in the face of danger, was inclined to regard the defenders as a joke. He soon knew better. After waiting four days for the Greeks to run away he ordered his troops to attack; first the Medes charged, and then the Immortals; all were

beaten off with heavy losses, and Xerxes, watching, "thrice leaped from the throne on which he sate, in terror for his army". Next day the Persians did no better; the King was nonplussed. But now appears the figure, venal, odious, indispensable to all the best world crises: the figure of the traitor. An offer was made to show the Persians a pathway over the mountain, so that they might take the Greeks in the rear. The Immortals, chosen for the task, left the camp "about the time of the lighting of the lamps"; they marched all night, and at dawn came nearly to the summit. The pathway was guarded by a thousand Greeks, Phocians, who heard suddenly, in the still air, a great rustling in the leaves of the oak-groves on the slopes; they made ready to fight, but the Persians hurried on and down the other side of the mountain. The men in the pass already knew from scouts that they were betrayed. At a council it was decided that Leonidas and his three hundred should stay; the Thespians, seven hundred of them, insisted on staying with them; the Thebans, who were mistrusted, were, says Herodotus, kept back as hostages; the rest of the allies Leonidas sent home. As the sun went up the sky Xerxes advanced to the attack. The Thebans surrendered at the first chance; the Spartans and the Thespians fell fighting. They fought till their spears were broken, they fought till Leonidas was killed, they fought over his body. Then, seeing that the Persians who had crossed the mountain were upon them and that they were attacked from both sides,

"Drawing back into the narrowest part of the pass, and retreating even behind the cross wall, they posted

themselves upon a hillock, where they stood all drawn up together in one close body. . . . Here they defended themselves to the last, such as still had swords using them, and the others resisting with their hands and teeth; till the barbarians, who in part had pulled down the wall and attacked them in front, in part had gone round and now encircled them upon every side, overwhelmed and buried the remnant which was left beneath showers of missile weapons."

While the struggle was going on at Thermopylae, a sea-battle was taking place at Artemision. Once more the Aegean fought on the side of Greece; a thunderstorm wrecked yet another section of the Persian fleet, and in the engagement which followed the Persians suffered more than the Greeks. But the Greeks, too, had many damaged ships, and presently one of the watchers stationed to carry news between the land and the sea forces came hurrying to say that the defenders of Thermopylae had been annihilated. At this the fleet weighed anchor and sailed off to Salamis. The Persian army swept south, laying waste the country, burning cities and plundering temples. It was not long before they reached Attica and Athens. They found the city deserted; on the Acropolis, however, the citadel of Athens, a few men remained, and had fortified the place with planks and boards: some were keepers of the treasure in the temple, some poor people who believed this was the "wooden wall" which would save them. All the rest of the Athenians had taken their families off by boat and sent them to the neighbouring islands of Aegina and Salamis or to the Peloponnese.

At first the Persians could find no way to storm the Acropolis. Then an unsuspected path was discovered up the steep north slopes; a few soldiers climbed it, surprised the wretched garrison, massacred them, and set fire to the temple. The Acropolis was lost; Athens and Attica were lost; and the greater part of northern Greece was to all intents and purposes in the hands of the enemy.

The Athenians now had no city; and the question among the Greek captains gathered in their ships at Salamis was whether to fight where they were for territory already, it seemed, lost, or to give battle at the Isthmus in defence of the Peloponnese. The councils which went before the battle are remarkable, apart from their intrinsic interest and excitement, for the extraordinary freedom of discussion which they show; the captains speak their mind in a "skirmish of words", the matter is put to the vote. Superficially seen, the situation might be said to reveal the weakness which, authoritarians insist, is inherent in democracy; faced with an immensely more numerous and a victorious enemy, the Greeks still could not agree among themselves on a course of action, but instead fell to abusing one another, the Corinthian captain taunting the Athenian with having no country, the Athenian threatening, if battle were not joined at Salamis, to take his ships and his men with their families to Italy and leave the rest to fight without him. But beneath all their dissensions and their changes of mind the Greeks had something which the Persians, with all their regimented unity, did not know. They had an idea which seemed to them more valuable than life: the idea of liberty.

In the end it was, according to Herodotus, by a trick on the part of Themistocles, the Athenian captain, that the battle was fought at Salamis. The choice of position greatly benefited the Greeks. Salamis is a large island lying in the curve of the coast between Athens and Megara and separated, a short way from Athens, by only a narrow channel from the mainland. In these enclosed waters the battle was fought, while Xerxes watched from a hill on the mainland. He saw his more numerous ships out-manoeuvred and out-fought and in the end defeated with heavy losses; and though he still had enough ships to fight again and his army was unbeaten, he decided to go home. The winter was coming on; he ordered his ships back to the Hellespont, left his lieutenant Mardonius and a considerable force in Thessaly to fight again next year, and set off in all haste for Asia. Before he left the Spartans, advised by the Delphic oracle, with superb insolence sent a herald requiring satisfaction for the death of Leonidas. The King laughed and said Mardonius would give them the satisfaction they deserved. Then he took the rest of his army home.

"In five and forty days he reached the place of passage, where he arrived with scarce a fraction, so to speak, of his former army. All along their line of march, in every country where they chanced to be, his soldiers seized and devoured whatever corn they could find belonging to the inhabitants; while, if no corn was to be found, they gathered the grass that grew in the fields, and stripped the trees, whether cultivated or wild, alike of their bark and of their leaves, and so fed themselves. They left nothing anywhere, so hard were they pressed by hunger.

Plague too and dysentery attacked the troops while still upon their march, and greatly thinned their ranks. Many died; others fell sick and were left behind in the different cities that lay upon the route, the inhabitants being strictly charged by Xerxes to tend and feed them."

The pageant was over. Next year Mardonius did indeed give the Spartans satisfaction for the death of Leonidas. Having failed in attempts to separate the Athenians from their alliance with the Spartans, he occupied Athens for the second time; and again he found a deserted city, the people having retired to Salamis or to their ships. They felt a natural grievance that, even after the victories of the last year, no army had come from the Peloponnese to help them; and they sent envoys in reproach. The devout Spartans were once more busied with the service of the gods. This time the feast of the Hyacinthia detained them from their military obligations; one hardly likes to mention that they had also on hand the building of a defensive wall across the Isthmus. Presently, however, they decided to send an army; at the Isthmus it was joined by other Peloponnesian contingents, and at Eleusis by the Athenians. Mardonius, having destroyed what he could at Athens, marched north again to Boeotia and prepared for a battle. It was fought at Plataea; the Persian army was destroyed and Mardonius himself was killed. At the same time a blow was being struck at the Persians in their own waters. The Greek fleet crossed from Delos to Mycale, a point on the coast of Asia Minor opposite Samos, landed there, and defeated a strong Persian force consisting of soldiers left to guard Ionia and of sailors who had dragged their boats ashore so as

to be under the protection of the army. The Greeks then sailed off to the Hellespont and besieged Sestos, a city on the European shore still held by the enemy. Late in the year it surrendered; and the Greeks went home, taking with them the shore cables from the bridge over the Hellespont which Xerxes had crossed in such pomp a year earlier. The invasion of Greece was over, Europe was safe from the barbarians from the East.

Perhaps it will be said that to outline events so celebrated was unnecessary. Yet it may not be quite without point to recall years which for all their distance have parallels today. Certainly it will not be without point if it sends anyone to read or re-read Herodotus's incomparable narrative: a narrative which from the first pages makes the Greeks of the fifth century before Christ seem contemporary with ourselves. To anyone who has travelled in Greece the romance which attaches to the history of the Persian Wars is given an extraordinary poignancy by recollection of the landscape amidst which they were fought: the crescent of the bay of Marathon, emerald in spring, and the mountains which encircle it; the view from the pass between Attica and Boeotia, where the road swings down to the plain, to Plataea and Thebes; the dark hills of Thermopylae and the mist rising from the marsh; Salamis, a bare, irregular mass across the narrow strait, and the fishermen hauling in their nets in the calm bay of Eleusis. There, one thinks, there it happened; and there again, in the bitter spring of 1941, Greeks fought and died for the idea of liberty. News came late in April, 1941, that the line of the defenders had withdrawn south of Lamia; in this region, said the voice

over the radio, carefully emotionless, lies the pass of Thermopylae. This time the passes south from Thessaly were held by soldiers from Australia and New Zealand as well as by Greeks. The Greeks themselves earlier found a new Thermopylae in the passes of Thrace; there, in the Struma forts, they held out long after the invaders had swept past their flank down the Vardar Valley, there they fought, many of them, till they died. Who can say there is not a continuity in the story of Greece?

Greece has suffered in her long history vicissitudes as violent as any country has known. For long periods she has been eclipsed; she has vanished, almost, from the European nations; but whenever she has emerged she has been found holding fast to this same idea of liberty, and the noblest moments of her story have been those in which she fought not to lose it.

Those who consider that the character of a great people should have the dead calm of a Praxitelean marble are apt to reproach the Greeks, ancient and modern, with their quarrels amongst themselves. After the battles at Salamis, Plataea, and Mycale, indeed, the Greek allies soon fell out. The Athenians went on to further victories against the Persians, taking the war into the enemy's country; the Spartans held back, jealous of the growing strength of the rival leaders; the military history of Greece becomes once again a history of wars between states, rising to its tragic climax in the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta. In the midst of her struggles Athens produces her miracles of art and learning. But ancient Greece never again achieved even such unity as she had shown at Plataea; and when a

strong and disciplined power presented itself, as Persia had presented itself, at her borders she was not equal to the effort of resisting it. In 338 B.C. at Chaeronea in Boeotia the Greeks were defeated by a people themselves, in speech at least, Greek: the Macedonians. There follows what is called the Hellenistic period: the period, under Alexander and his successors, when, though Greek culture spread to Egypt and through Asia Minor, Syria, and Mesopotamia, Greece herself had become part of an Empire not her own.

War was still to be her natural condition. After many convulsions the country falls next to the Romans, in 31 B.C. it becomes a Roman province. The Roman Empire splits in two in 330 A.D., with Rome as the Western capital and Constantinople (Greek Byzantium) as the Eastern; later Rome ceased to be the Imperial capital, and Constantinople only was left. The Roman Empire had become a Greco-Roman Empire; and now the Byzantine Emperors were its rulers. Meanwhile Greece is still torn by invasions. In the third and fourth centuries A.D. the Goths had twice ravaged the country. From the sixth to the ninth century there is the struggle against the Slavs, who seize the opportunity of the depopulation caused by the plague in the middle of the eighth century to occupy the empty lands and colonise them. At the end of the ninth century the Bulgarians appear from the north, but are driven back early in the tenth by the Byzantine Emperor Basil II. Next come the Normans, who under Robert Guiscard conquer Epirus and part of Thessaly, and under Roger III of Sicily lay waste the coastal district south of Epirus and take Thebes and Corinth.

In 1204 the god-fearing knights of the Fourth Crusade, setting out to save the Holy Land, thought better of it on the way and fell instead on a Christian city—Constantinople. They took it, plundered it, slaughtered its inhabitants, and in a last access of piety replaced the Eastern Church, finally separated in 1054 A.D. from the Western Church, by Catholicism after the Roman model. For fifty-seven years there was a Latin Empire with its centre at Constantinople.

Greece was at the time of the Latin Conquest mostly under Byzantine domination, though Genoese pirates had seized Corfu, and other of the Ionian islands were in the hands of Italians acknowledging the overlordship of Sicily. Thessaly as far south as Lamia was held by the Wallachs or Vlachs, while the islands near Athens were infested by corsairs. Now the country was subdued by the Latins, and organised according to the feudal system; there were principalities, divided into baronies each with so many fiefs; at the bottom of the pyramid were the Greeks, a few of them feudatories with certain privileges, but the great majority serfs and little better than slaves. Centres of resistance persisted and grew, however; by 1261 Constantinople had been recaptured by the Byzantine Greeks, and much of Greece itself was gradually won back. Until Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453, bringing the Byzantine Empire to its end, the struggle continued between Latins and Greeks and between the Latins themselves: provinces change hands, conquerors succeed conquerors: Athens becomes in turn Burgundian, Catalan, Florentine and Venetian—"that picturesque and motley crowd of Burgundian, Flemish,

and Lombard nobles, German knights, rough soldiers of fortune from Cataluna and Navarre, Florentine financiers, Neapolitan courtiers, shrewd Venetian and Genoese merchant princes, and last but not least, the bevy of high-born dames, sprung from the oldest families of France, who make up, together with the Greek *archons* and the Greek serfs, the persons of the romantic drama of which Greece was the theatre for 250 years".*

Such was the composition of Greece in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. In the fourteenth century fresh immigrants appeared: Albanians, who settled in numbers in Thessaly and began to oust the Vlachs; at the end of the century they were encouraged by the Catalans to settle in Attica and Boeotia, and early in the fifteenth century a large number moved into the Peloponnese. But before this more dangerous visitors were in Greece: the Turks.

In the last decade of the fifteenth century the Florentine Duke of Athens was paying tribute to the Sultan. Constantinople fell in 1453; by 1460 the Turks were masters of all Greece with the exception of a few tiny districts and some fortresses on the mainland, nearly all Venetian; the islands, both Ionian and Aegean, were left in the hands of Italians, chiefly Genoese and Venetians. The Venetians continued to contest the mainland with the Turks, and for a short period at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century overran the Peloponnese; twice Athens fell into their hands. The Duchy of the Archipelago, as the Cyclades were called under Italian rule, held out against Turkish pressure for a

* *The Latins in the Levant*. By William Miller.

century longer than the Greek mainland; the Ionian Islands and Crete were Italian until the eighteenth century. But for the great mass of the Greek people the rule of the Turks lasted nearly four centuries, from 1460 to the War of Independence.

During those four centuries Greece vanished; apparently she did not exist. She had, indeed, hardly seemed to exist as a country for many centuries; hardly, perhaps, since the Latin Empire at Constantinople. In the days of the Byzantine Empire Greek culture had once again shone in a dark world; Constantinople had taken its place in the mind of the Greeks beside Athens as a symbol of their greatness. That Empire was destroyed by the Fourth Crusade long before the Turks came; though it was afterwards restored it never regained its solidity. And however fascinating to the historian Frankish Greece may be, to most people it is not Greece at all; it is a country whose features are hidden by a mask. The Frankish conquerors brought with them their own institutions as well as their follies and jealousies; feudalism of a kind was not unknown before their arrival, but it was a replica of Western chivalry which they imposed on Eastern Europe. It is not easy to distinguish, beneath the overlay of French and Italian and German society, the face of Greece. Yet, amidst all the changes and chances of conquest and reconquest, the life of the country persists. It persists in the Greek serfs under Latin feudalism; it persists all through the centuries of Turkish domination. The people go on existing and they go on being Greek: that is all. Then suddenly, when the moment comes, the life bursts out in a spontaneous explosion of courage and determination.

I spoke just now of the dissensions among the Greeks throughout their history. Dissensions, yes; but in crisis dissension may be overcome. Three times Greece summons the resolve to defend her liberty at any cost: in the Persian Wars, in the War of Independence, and now. In the Persian Wars not the whole of Greece, indeed, joined in the fight against the invaders; there were differences among the revolutionary leaders in the War of Independence; in this war there was unity. Three times she sets an example to all men of goodwill. The first time her military successes against an incomparably more powerful enemy are, seen from this great distance, no more than an episode in a dazzling period of literary and artistic achievement: achievement from which the civilised world has never ceased to learn. This, the third time, she has another kind of example to show: the example of a nation fighting as one man; never has Greece been united as she was united in the winter and spring of 1940–41. Of the whole course of Greek history one might say: always in the years of her greatness, the times when she rises above the fogs which obscure all the races of men in turn, we recognise in her a force on the side of freedom. One might go further, and say: as long as Greece has lived, she has fought for liberty; intellectual liberty as well as political liberty.

Greece was the first of the subject countries of Europe to rise against the Turks; to her example, it may be, the Balkan States owe the freedom they enjoyed until they were robbed of it by Germany. The struggle, in part prepared by a Greek revolutionary society in Odessa, began in 1821 when the Archbishop of Patras gave the

signal from Hagia Lavra, near Kalavryta in the Peloponnese. It is interesting to note the part played by the Church, which by its very nature was bound to oppose the Moslem rule and which since the final collapse of the Byzantine Empire had acted as a focus for Greek sentiment. The Oecumenical Patriarch had remained in Constantinople after its fall, his jurisdiction had been confirmed by the conqueror, Mohammed II, and since the traditions of the Patriarchate were Greek there had been at least a central authority which the Greeks, more than the Serbs, the Bulgarians, and the Rumanians, could claim as their own. (The responsibility of the Church, indeed, was not under-estimated by the Sultan, who on the outbreak of the revolution promptly hanged the Patriarch Gregorios.)

The struggle for independence lasted ten years. It was carried on by intellectual leaders from Constantinople, by sailors from the island trading communities of Hydra, Spetsai and Psara, by Greek and Albanian Klefts, fighters (and sometimes brigands) from the mountains who had never submitted to the Turks. That there should have been differences between leaders so oddly assorted was only natural; still the fight went on, with, from the outside world, moral support steadily increasing and translated at last into practical support. Not even moral support was forthcoming at first from the Governments of the Great Powers; only the Tsar, protector of the Orthodox Church, was sympathetic to the Greeks not as Greeks but as Christians. It would be agreeable to record that the Government of Great Britain from the start was as eager for the liberation of Greece as the English poets;

unfortunately it would not be true. The idea that a nation as such had the right to independence—in fact the whole idea of nationalism—was new to the European Governments. Luckily then as now the minds of the people were apt to move faster than the minds of their rulers. The course of the war roused public opinion in support of the revolutionaries; money was raised, volunteers presented themselves, early and foremost among them Byron, who died of a fever before he had the chance to fight, but who today is counted among their own heroes by the Greeks. Gradually the Powers manoeuvred one another into mediating between the Greeks and the Turks. In July, 1827, Great Britain, France, and Russia signed a treaty engaging themselves to secure autonomy for Greece under Turkish suzerainty. The next thing was to stop the war. The Greeks agreed to an armistice. The Allied fleets, commanded by the British Admiral Codrington, were given the job of persuading the Turks, without, of course, any bloodshed. In October, 1827, the fleets sailed into Navarino harbour, where the Turco-Egyptian ships were ranged. A few shots were fired on the Turkish side; a general engagement followed; and the Turkish fleet was destroyed. A year later, Russia by then having declared war, the Turkish troops withdrew from the Peloponnese; the year after that, from Northern Greece. The Powers had, after all, rescued Greece. In 1829 the London Protocol provided for an autonomous Greece under a hereditary prince. Complete independence was, however, agreed on in the Protocol of 1830.

The Greeks were a free nation at last: but a very small

nation without Crete or the Ionian islands, including indeed the Cyclades and the Northern Sporades but stopping short at a line drawn from the Gulf of Arta to the Gulf of Volo—short of Thessaly and Epirus. Their history for the next century is largely the history of a struggle for expansion. A Bavarian king, Otho, reigned for twenty-nine years, was overthrown, and was succeeded by a Danish Prince, George I, grandfather of the present King of the Hellenes; in 1843 the monarchy under pressure declared itself constitutional; in 1864 a new Constitution was drawn up, which was revised in 1911; by the Constitution of 1927 a Senate was provided for. Meanwhile a gallant effort for economic development, though resulting in a considerable extension of agriculture, foreign trade and the merchant marine, was not always furthered by the foreign relations of the country.

It is important to remember that Greece had not a single but a double heritage of greatness. The people thought, indeed, of their classical tradition: all round them were its noble relics; but there were other relics, too, the relics of the Byzantine splendour. Greece remembered the Greek Empire of Constantinople; she looked at her straitened frontiers, and thought how many men of Greek race lived outside it. In those days the policy of the Great Idea took hold: "to reunite in a single Greek state all the provinces of the old Byzantine Empire where the Greek element predominated, with Constantinople as capital".

The first attempt at expansion was a failure: an invasion of Thessaly and Epirus in 1854, during the Crimean War; this, not unnaturally, was ill received by

a Great Britain engaged in fighting to preserve Turkey. There is, however, satisfaction in remembering that Greece owed her first territorial gain to this country, who in 1864 presented her with the Ionian Islands, under British protection since 1815. The question of Thessaly came up again at the Congress of Berlin in 1878; three years later, after conferences, negotiations, frontier commissions, recommendations, and what-not, Greece was given Thessaly and the Arta district of Epirus. There were no more gains before the Balkan Wars. But Crete was continually in a state of insurrection, and clamouring for union with Greece. In 1896 revolution broke out in the island; among the insurgents was a young man called Venizelos. Sympathy with Crete excited Greece into war with Turkey in the following year; she was defeated, but Crete had won complete self-government.

In 1910 Venizelos, called to Athens as political adviser to the Military League, a group of dissident Greek officers, became Prime Minister. The revision of the Constitution was at once taken in hand. Foreign officers became eligible for service of State, and British, Italian, and French officers were called in to reorganise Navy, Gendarmerie, and Army respectively; elementary education was declared free and compulsory; no soldiers or public servants were to be eligible as Deputies; an effort was made to provide security of tenure for judges and other public officials. While inside the State an attack was thus made on corruption and inefficiency, in foreign affairs Venizelos made energetic moves towards better relations with Greece's Balkan neighbours. The Balkan

States, painfully shaking themselves free of Turkish over-lordship, still seemed incapable of keeping out of quarrels amongst themselves; Bulgarians and Greeks were at loggerheads over Macedonia, by now a dangerous border land, in Turkish hands, between the new States; diplomatic relations between Greece and Rumania had been broken off since 1905.

Venizelos was so far successful that in May, 1912, a secret Treaty of Alliance was signed with Bulgaria, and the foundations of the Balkan League against Turkey were laid. During the summer anarchy in Macedonia came to a head, and at the end of September the Balkan States were mobilising and demanding reforms. Montenegro was the first to declare war; Turkey then declared war on Bulgaria and Serbia. Greece was offered bribes to remain neutral, but Venizelos saw the importance of cooperating with the rest of the Balkans. Greece therefore declared war on Turkey in October, 1912.

Up to now she had existed under the tutelage of the Great Powers. The Great Powers had rebuked her impatience to annex Thessaly and decided at what moment she was to be given it; the Great Powers had chosen her kings; the Great Powers had magnanimously permitted the autonomy of Crete. Suddenly, in concert with her Balkan neighbours, she asserted herself; and this time there was no rebuke. Turkey was defeated, and in May, 1913, signed a treaty handing over all her territory in Europe except what lay east of a line drawn from Enos on the Aegean to Midia on the Black Sea. Crete was to be united to Greece; the question of the rest of the Aegean islands and Albania was to be settled by the

Powers. At this point the Balkan Allies fell out among themselves; Bulgaria attacked Greece and Serbia, and Roumania came in with a claim on Bulgaria, who was in her turn defeated. This, the Second Balkan War, was ended by the Treaty of Bucharest of August, 1913. Greece gained, as well as Crete, all the Aegean islands held by Turkey except Imbros and Tenedos (at the entrance to the Dardanelles); the islands of the Dodecanese, of course, were in the hands of Italy, who had seized them from Turkey in the course of the Tripolitanian war, and in spite of promises to withdraw later had remained immovable. On the mainland, Greece now had possession of Southern Epirus and of Macedonia as far as Florina and Doiran on the north and the River Mesta on the east. This gave her not only Salonika but Kavalla, centre of the rich tobacco-growing district of north-eastern Macedonia. It gave her also a considerable alien population, both Moslem and Bulgarian. Bulgaria came out of the Balkan Wars with Western Thrace, comprising the Aegean coastline from the River Mesta to Enos at the mouth of the River Maritza, and a sense of injury at having failed to secure Kavalla. On Greece's north-western border a new independent state had been created: Albania.

A year after the Treaty of Bucharest came the outbreak of the Great War. Bulgaria ranged herself on the side of Turkey and Germany and in 1916 advanced into Macedonia, occupying Kavalla on the way. Greece was divided into two camps: the supporters of King Constantine and neutrality, the supporters of Venizelos and war on the side of the Allies; it was the beginning of the

feud between Royalists and Venizelists which was to harry the country for nearly a quarter of a century. In 1917 the King abdicated in favour of his second son, Alexander, and Greece entered the war on the side of Great Britain and France; by July of 1918 with the help of the Allies she had equipped an army of a quarter of a million men, and in September she took a distinguished part in the offensive which ended with the capitulation of Bulgaria and so contributed to the final collapse of Germany.

At the end of the Great War Greece was in a powerful position; earlier in this book it was pointed out that, by the Asia Minor disaster, she lost nearly all she had gained. I have tried also to show how by wise statesmanship and courage her losses were turned to advantage, while the old enmity with Turkey was converted into friendship. The new Greece which emerged from a decade of wars, whatever her internal difficulties, had one great asset: she was a homogeneous State with no important minorities. The Bulgarians in Macedonia and Thrace had most of them taken advantage of the arrangements for voluntary exchange of population; the Moslems, except those in Western Thrace and Albanian Moslems in Tsamuria, had been compulsorily exchanged. Scattered over the country, but mainly in Attica, eastern Boeotia, the Corinthia, and the Argolid, are other Albanian communities, some dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, others from 1770, when numbers of Albanians settled on the land after being used by the Turks to suppress a revolt. Of the later group, many still speak Albanian; but in essence all are Greek, with Greek interests and

sympathies and national sentiments. Greece, in fact, is a country with one people: Greeks.

It has sometimes been argued that the people living in Greece today are not descended from the Greeks of ancient times. A country dominated by Romans, Franks, and Turks in turn, invaded by Slavs and Albanians, Goths and Vandals, the perpetual battleground of Europeans and Asiatics, a country buried for centuries beneath the dead weight of conquest—how, it is asked, can the people of such a country have survived? One scholar in the nineteenth century (I need hardly say that he was a German) went so far as to claim that they had been annihilated by the invasions of the Slavs and the Albanians, and that the Greek race, in fact, no longer existed. His theory has since been rejected by competent opinion. Nobody except a fanatical nationalist would, I imagine, deny that the Greeks of today are a mixed race. The pure Albanian element I have just spoken of; among the modern Greeks who make up the great majority of the population there is, no doubt, Roman blood, Slav and Albanian blood, perhaps even a trace of the Frank and Venetian overlordship of the middle ages. But the main strain is Greek; there can be no doubt of it to those who know the country and the people.

The Greeks have held for two thousand years to existence, now, as under the Roman Empire of the East, becoming themselves ascendant, now, as under the Turkish domination in Europe, withdrawing into themselves and merely enduring. The shock of invasion has been absorbed, the invaders have with pain and time been assimilated. There is something in the Greeks

stronger than invasion and conquest; endurance, a kind of integrity, ultimately, perhaps, courage. When at long last they had their independence again they may not at once have come to themselves as a nation; four centuries of complete subjection is not, after all, a good training for the difficult business of government and international politics. Gradually they proved their claim to be regarded as something more than an unruly nation to be scolded and managed in leisure hours by Great Powers preoccupied with the business of power politics. Gradually their enterprise, individuality, energy were recognised. At last in the autumn of 1940 came their opportunity to prove themselves of the same fabric as the men who fought the Persian hosts. Easy for them to refuse the contest; no voice from the outside world, surely, would have blamed them if they had given, in the ancient phrase, earth and water to the heralds of the enemy. It was the difficult, honourable way they chose; and in the six months from the Italian invasion to the odious and contemptible German triumph of spring, 1941, they earned, if ever a people earned it, the right to be counted in the line of descent from the greatness of the ancient world.

The bearing of these people in their unequal war with Germany and Italy was not due to a sudden and isolated burst of bravery; it was the result of something innate in them, it was a symbol of the essential continuity of Greek history. As fighters they were what they had been. But I do not think that anyone who has any understanding of the modern Greeks could doubt that in many ways the country has not changed. The cities indeed have

changed, the vivid, intense artistic life which was their commonplace has gone; but in the country districts rustic life goes on much as it went on in ancient Greece. The shepherd in his goatskin cloak, watching his flocks in the Boeotian plains, with behind him the enormous background of Parnassos and Helikon—surely a shepherd stood there, in just that posture of resignation, two thousand five hundred years ago? The Greeks are still bold traders; from bays and island harbours the small boats ply as they have always plied. Travellers fresh from Plato and Aeschylus are sometimes given to complaining that life in Athens is not conducted in the mood of a Socratic dialogue; I remember a Cambridge don hurrying down from the Acropolis full of bitter injury because he had heard a motor horn. It would be more reasonable to consider what remains of ancient Greece; not only the relics of her architecture, still standing in the shadow of the mountains, but the living relic of language. For the people still speak and write a Greek in which are recognisable the features of classical Greek.

There are two languages in Greece: demotic or vernacular Greek, and *katharévousa*, purist, learned Greek. *Katharévousa* is the official and, to a certain extent, the written language; it is the language of the Church, the Universities, Parliament, and most of the newspapers. Demotic is the language everywhere spoken: a lively, vigorous language, with many foreign words and simplified grammatical forms but still in its essential structure and vocabulary a development of classical Greek. There has long been a controversy between the partisans of the two forms; most writers now use a kind of demotic

Greek, many educated people claim to speak a kind of *katharévousa*. Foreigners who know ancient Greek can read the purist language of the newspapers without much trouble; to speak modern, demotic Greek is a different matter. But both forms are still Greek; that is the important point.

From the centuries of war, invasion, and subjection the Greeks emerged with a language directly descended from the classical language. It bound them together as a people when there was danger of disintegration; it has served since their emancipation as a link with their great past. In the century of their freedom they became increasingly conscious of their traditions: a people proud without vanity, and patriotic without vainglory. With much labour they organised the country which once more was theirs; they struggled towards a reasonable system of central and local government, they built roads and railways, they established hospitals and universities. Land was brought under cultivation, trade was planned; in the villages schools were set up, and while the rhythm of country life sang on the peasants saw their children given a new learning: "He went to school, he can read and write," said the old women proudly of their sons. The people still kept their simplicity, their hospitality, and their democratic freedom of manner. They were, it seemed, an easy-going race; they were tired of wars. Yet when war came they accepted its challenge without hesitation. The national identity which had been preserved through centuries with so much tribulation was threatened again, the liberty which had been won was again in danger. For the Greeks this was indeed "total" war: the

total war of the free people of mountain and sea, the shepherds and fishermen, the men who work in fields and vineyards and olive-groves, against the men of steel and fire: the creators against the destroyers: life against death. They chose life. We need not fear, any more than they feared, the extinction of the vital spirit. Their country will live again, and they with it. In the words of Pericles: "Thus choosing to die resisting, rather than to live submitting, they fled only from dishonour, but met danger face to face, and after one brief moment, while at the summit of their fortune, escaped, not from their fear, but from their glory."

WAR CHRONOLOGY

1939

April 7. Italian occupation of Albania begins.

April 10. Italy reaffirms her friendly intentions towards Greece.

April 13. First public announcements of British and French guarantees to Greece and Rumania.

Sept. 3. Britain and France at war with Germany.

Sept. 20. Announcement of withdrawal of Italian and Greek troops from Greco-Albanian frontier.

Nov. 3. Publication of Notes, dated September 30, exchanged between Greek Prime Minister and Italian Minister in Athens reaffirming principles of Italo-Greek Pact of Friendship, Conciliation and Judicial Settlement of 1928.

1940

June 10. Italy enters war.

June 18. First Italian complaints of presence of British naval units in Greek waters.

July 12. Italian air attack on Greek lighthouse supply ship and destroyers.

July 30. Italian air attack on Greek destroyers in Gulf of Corinth and submarines at anchor at Naupaktos.

Aug. 2. Italian air attack on Greek revenue cutter.

Aug. 11. Italian outburst on Daout Hodja affair.

Aug. 15. Italian submarine torpedoes Greek light cruiser *Helle* anchored at Tenos. Italian air attack on Greek SS. *Frinton*.

Sept. 23 to Oct. 5. Italian planes repeatedly fly over Greek territory.

Oct. 28. Italian ultimatum to Greece. Invasion of Greece begins.

Nov. 6. Alpini reported trapped in Pindus gorges.
Nov. 8. Greek withdrawal on Epirus front to River Acheron.
Nov. 10. Alpini Division in Sarandaporos valley by now completely routed.
Nov. 11. British Fleet Air Arm attack Italian warships at Taranto.
Nov. 13. Italians reported retreating from River Kalamas.
Nov. 20. Greeks break through on Epirus front.
Nov. 22. Fall of Koritza.
Nov. 23. Last remaining Italians on Greek soil driven across frontier.
Nov. 30. Capture of Pogradets.
Dec. 4. Premeti occupied.
Dec. 5. Capture of Santi Quaranta.
Dec. 8. Fall of Argyrokastro.
Dec. 9. Opening of British offensive in Western desert.
Dec. 23. Fall of Chimara.

1941

Jan. 10. Klisura taken.
Jan. 13. General Soddu replaced.
Jan. 29. Death of Metaxas.
Feb. 4. Penetration of Zog line announced.
Feb. 10. Renewal of widespread Italian air raids on Greek towns.
March 2. Eden and Dill in Athens.
March 8. Publication of Vlachos letter.
March 9. Opening of violent Italian offensive on 20-mile front.
March 15. End of unsuccessful Italian offensive.
March 25. Yugoslav Premier and Foreign Minister sign Tripartite Pact.
March 27. Overthrow of Yugoslav Government.
March 28. Battle of Cape Matapan.
April 6. Germany invades Yugoslavia and Greece.
April 8. German troops reach Aegean. Yugoslav withdrawal exposes Greek left flank.
April 9. Germans in Salonika.

April 10. Germans in contact with British and Imperial forces.
April 12. British and Imperial forces withdrawing to new positions.
April 15. Greek High Command announce withdrawal from Koritza.
April 17. End of organised Yugoslav resistance.
April 18. Death of Korizis. British and Imperial forces withdrawing again.
April 22. Surrender of Greek armies in Epirus and Macedonia.
April 23. Greek Government announces move to Crete.
April 24. Evacuation of British and Imperial forces begins.
April 26. Germans in Thebes.
April 27. Germans in Athens and Corinth.
May 1. End of evacuation of British and Imperial forces.
May 20. Air-borne attack on Crete begins.
May 21. Germans secure foothold on Maleme aeròdrome.
May 24. Greek King and Government announced to have left Crete.
May 28. Allied forces withdraw east of Suda Bay.
June 1. Announcement of withdrawal of British and Imperial forces from Crete.
June 10. Mussolini announces that Italians will occupy all Greece.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

THE best source for the history of the period immediately before the Italo-Greek war is the Greek White Book, "Italy's Aggression against Greece", from which I have quoted a number of passages. Three indispensable books for the study of modern Greece are: "South-Eastern Europe", Information Department Papers No. 26, published by the Royal Institute of International Affairs; "Modern Greece, 1800–1931", by John Mavrogordato; and "Greece", by William Miller.

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