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S E C R E T

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15th. August, 1941.

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REPORT OF THE OPERATIONS CARRIED OUT BY THE ROYAL AIR FORCE  
IN GREECE: NOVEMBER, 1940 to APRIL, 1941.

Appendix "A" - Memorandum on Air policy in Greece.  
Appendix "B" - Lessons of the Campaign.

Sir,

I have the honour to forward the following report on the operations carried out by the Royal Air Force under my command in Greece from November, 1940 to April, 1941.

Introduction:

2. In framing this report, my object is to describe the various problems with which we were confronted from time to time and how we attempted to solve them; our reasons for adopting certain definite lines of policy; the difficulties with which we were faced; our successes and failures; and finally to draw attention to some of the lessons we learnt in a campaign which, although perhaps not entirely successful in its highest conception, contributed materially to the prosecution of the war as a whole and formed a chapter in history of which the Royal Air Force may well be proud. I do not propose to compile a day to day record of all the activities of the Command. Apart from the immensity of such a task, an account of this description would not serve any useful purpose and would only tend to obscure those particular points which I wish to emphasise. Nevertheless, in order to obtain some form of continuity, it is necessary to deal with the campaign in chronological sequence. I propose, therefore, dividing it into three periods of two months into which arrangement the campaign conveniently divides itself from the strategical point of view.

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER, 1940.

Declaration of War:

3. At 5 o'clock in the morning of 28th. October, 1940, the Italian Minister in Athens handed to the Prime Minister of Greece a note from his Government complaining in strong terms of alleged Greek assistance to the allies and demanding for the Italians the right to occupy certain strategic bases in Greece. General Metaxas regarded this note as an ultimatum which he promptly refused and a few hours later, Greece was at war with Italy.

Unlike the Italians, the Greek forces were not prepared for war. Their regular Army units were at their peace time stations throughout the country and general mobilisation had not been ordered. On being attacked, the Greek units holding the frontier posts on the mountainous borders of Albania, although fighting with the greatest gallantry, were overwhelmed in some cases by sheer weight of numbers and compelled to give ground.

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This was particularly the case in regions where conditions were suitable for the employment of Italian mechanised forces. The progress of the Italian army was, however, slow for although Italy had concentrated large forces on the Greek frontier, the firm attitude adopted by the Greek government came as somewhat of a surprise as it had been thought that all Italian demands would be met without resort to arms. It was confirmed also from the reports of prisoners taken in the first few days that the opening of hostilities was quite unexpected by the Italian soldiers themselves, who had been led to expect a diplomatic victory and a peaceful advance into Greek territory.

#### The Greek Problem:

4. It was clear that the problem confronting the Greeks was largely one of time. Could her frontier units hold the Italian forces sufficiently long to enable her armies to be mobilised and concentrated? As is well known, Greece is badly served by communications. Roads and railways on the mainland are few in number and the former are in most cases bad. A number of her reservists had to come from the Greek islands and it was estimated that it would take at least three weeks for the Greek mobilisation to be completed and for sufficient forces to be concentrated in the battle area before she could really consider herself reasonably safe. In the meantime, the Italian air force could, if handled properly, play havoc with their mobilisation and concentration arrangements. This, for some unaccountable reason, the Italians failed completely to do and wasted their comparatively strong air force in abortive attacks on undefended islands and hospitals in Salonika.

#### The Greek Air Force.

5. The Greek Air Force, although small and outnumbered by the Italian, fought most gallantly during this initial stage. Their pilots, many of whom had attended courses in England at the C.F.S. and elsewhere, were keen and what they lacked in modern war technique they made up for in personal bravery. Their aircraft, like those of most small independent nations not possessing an aircraft industry of their own, consisted of a number of different foreign types, French and Polish predominating, with a limited range of spares.

6. Operationally, the Greek Air Force was controlled by the General Staff and was used almost entirely in direct support of their army. They were quite unable to obtain any degree of air superiority and in consequence they suffered severe casualties. In addition, owing to the difficulty of obtaining spares, an abnormally high proportion of unserviceability soon existed and in a comparatively short time, their effort was reduced to negligible proportions.

#### Decision to send an R.A.F. Contingent.

7. In response to an urgent appeal for help, the British Government decided to send a contingent of the Royal Air Force to Greece from the Middle East. The force decided upon was to consist of two medium bomber squadrons, one mixed medium bomber and two seater fighter squadron - all armed with Blenheim aircraft, and two single seater fighter squadrons armed with Gladiator aircraft. On my arrival in Athens on 6th. November, 1940, the advance elements of this force had already arrived and were ready for action.

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Air Policy.

8. That evening I attended a conference with the Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief to discuss the war situation generally. Every pressure was brought to bear on me to employ my force in the same manner as the Greek Air Force, in close support of the land forces. I appreciated, however, that the best help I could give to the Greek armies was to concentrate my small bomber force on the enemy's disembarkation ports in Albania and the important centres in his lines of communication. I argued that such a plan would do far more to delay his advance than if I attacked his forward elements. If, however, the situation deteriorated considerably, and a break through occurred, I would of course devote the whole of my force to the immediate task of stemming the enemy's advance. I finally obtained agreement on this policy and attacks were directed forthwith on the enemy's back areas. These attacks were maintained at maximum intensity with the few day bomber aircraft at my disposal and the detachments of Wellington aircraft sent over from Egypt to operate during the periods of moonlight. By the end of November, the Italian advance had been stemmed and the Greek forces who had by then completed their concentration were able to take the offensive. The Greek General Staff were most appreciative of the prompt and valuable help we had been able to provide for their gallant soldiers who, with ferocious intensity, had disputed every foot of the Greek soil and they expressed the view that it was largely due to our assistance that the situation had now become satisfactory.

Selection of Aerodromes.

9. One of the main difficulties I experienced in establishing my force and one which was a constant handicap throughout the whole campaign, was the extreme scarcity of aerodromes suitable for the employment of modern aircraft. There were no all weather aerodromes and on the mainland of Greece there are few areas in which aerodromes of any size can be made. In the Salonika area, the country is flat and a number of dry weather aerodromes already exists. For political reasons, however, I was not even allowed to reconnoitre these grounds, let alone use them. In the Larissa plain, there were many sites possible but by November, the rains had already commenced and, although I did station a fighter squadron in that area on its arrival, it was soon flooded out and aircraft were grounded for a period of ten days before they could be moved. There are few other sites in Greece except an occasional flat stretch on the coast and a certain number of level areas in the valleys, but the heavy rainfall and the prevalence of low clouds and mist make the latter quite unsuitable for operational purposes during the winter months, at any rate for modern bombers. I was forced, therefore, to concentrate my bomber force on the two aerodromes in the vicinity of Athens and station my fighter squadrons on whatever grounds I could find near the front line, where they had to operate under conditions of the greatest discomfort and difficulty.

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10. The main disadvantage of the aerodromes near Athens was that they were a long way from the front and it meant long hours of flying to and from the targets. They were, however, better drained and were only out of action for a few days after heavy rain. Furthermore, being near the sea, they were not so liable to get completely covered in by low clouds. Criticism has been made that the initial force which was sent to Greece was inadequate and many more squadrons should have been provided. I should like to point out, however, that even if these squadrons had been available, which they were not at the time, the lack of suitable aerodrome accommodation would, in my opinion, have prevented us from accepting them. During my first week in Greece, I made a tour of all possible sites and on my return pressed the Prime Minister to undertake immediately the construction of all weather runways at Araxos and Agrinion. I pointed out to him the operational disadvantages of the existing situation and that, unless suitable runways were provided near the front, the support that we could give to the Greek nation during the winter months would be severely limited. He agreed fully with my recommendations and arranged for the construction of runways to proceed immediately. After consulting with the head of the department concerned, he informed me that the runways would be completed by the end of January, 1941. (NOTE: Unfortunately, owing to weather conditions and shortage of material, this forecast proved over optimistic and neither of these was ready for use when I left the country at the end of April).

#### Arrival of the Force:

11. Units of the force continued to arrive throughout the months of November and December and by the end of the year the concentration was complete and the whole command functioning smoothly. When the composition of the force was being considered in the Middle East, it was decided that all the ancillary services such as hospital, works, rationing, etc., should be provided by the Army, with appropriate Army officers on my Headquarters staff to deal with them. This arrangement was particularly successful. Although, even in our respective services, few of us had served together before, officers of this combined staff soon settled down and worked with the greatest enthusiasm and co-operation. This happy atmosphere which existed at the top had, I consider, a beneficial effect on the relationship between the operational units and the actual services themselves who at all times provided our requirements in spite of countless difficulties occasioned by weather and terrain. Similarly, the liaison that existed between the British forces in Greece and the Greeks was at all times close and cordial. Every evening I attended a conference with the Commander-in-Chief and the Greek General Staff to discuss the day's land and air operations and to plan the programme of work for my force and for the Greek air force for the following day. These nightly meetings which were attended frequently by H.M. the King and General Metaxas when matters of higher policy were freely discussed were carried on throughout the whole of my stay in Greece and were invaluable from a co-operation point of view.

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Progress of Operations:

12. As regards the actual operations themselves, the Greeks had by now taken the offensive on land and, although handicapped by severe weather conditions and shortage of equipment, had managed to drive all the Italian forces off Greek territory and in some sectors had even advanced into Albania. In the air, our continued bombing offensive against the ports of Valona and Durazzo and the focal points on the enemy's rearward system was having a serious effect on his supply organisation. In addition, during moonlight periods, our bomber effort was being extended to targets on the mainland of Italy by means of Wellington aircraft detached from Egypt for the purpose and considerable damage was being inflicted on ports on both sides of the Adriatic. Similarly, our fighter aircraft were establishing a definite atmosphere of moral if not of numerical superiority in this theatre.

JANUARY/FEBRUARY, 1941.

Operational Difficulties.

15. The new year opened with a deterioration in the weather conditions. Heavy falls of snow and much low cloud made flying conditions difficult and dangerous. A further handicap now appeared in the form of severe icing conditions which were experienced by our aircraft over the mountainous country between their bases and the targets in Albania. To avoid this serious state of affairs, we were forced to route our bomber aircraft by way of the coast. Over the sea, the flying conditions were considerably better but this longer route limited the operational radius of action of our aircraft and militated against effecting surprise. Furthermore, enemy aircraft opposition was now becoming increasingly stronger and large numbers of modern enemy fighters were being encountered constantly over the targets. These reinforcements were undoubtedly being brought over in an effort to reduce the scale of our attacks on the enemy's rearward communication system, which were obviously causing him growing embarrassment. Whilst it was comforting to think that our bomber offensive was presumably having the desired effect, this addition to the enemy's fighter strength increased considerably our operational difficulties. It was now necessary to make full use of cloud cover and to adopt a system of fighter escorts for our day bomber raids if heavy casualties were to be avoided. Our lack of modern fighter aircraft and the difficulties encountered in arranging for bombers and their escorts to meet, owing to the distance between our bomber and fighter aerodromes, badly connected by communications, with weather conditions constantly changing, all tended to reduce the operational effort of my bomber force and it became increasingly obvious that, until the fine weather came and more aerodromes were made available, there would be little opportunity for any decisive action on our part.

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14. I would here like to pay a tribute to the magnificent spirit in which the pilots and air crews carried out their work during an exceedingly difficult period of operations. Based as they were in the Athens area, every raid carried out by the bomber squadrons involved a preliminary flight of at least 200 miles to the theatre of operations in weather conditions which were at times quite indescribable. Throughout the journey, the pilots and air crews were fully aware that they would meet strong fighter opposition over the targets and would have to engage the enemy before they were able to deliver their attacks. The number of lucrative targets in Albania was strictly limited and the Italians had by this time been able to concentrate a high scale of anti aircraft artillery to defend them and it was seldom that our aircraft came through unscathed. Having carried out their task, the long and arduous journey home had to be completed. Direction finding aids existed but the very nature of the country made their results unreliable and much had to be left to the skill, judgment and determination of the individual pilots. In spite of all these difficulties, however, squadrons cheerfully accepted all the tasks I gave them and maintained a scale of effort far beyond that which is normally expected from Service squadrons working under more favourable conditions. This same spirit prevailed in the fighter squadrons which were operating from forward aerodromes in conditions of extreme discomfort. Although outnumbered and armed with aircraft inferior in performance to those of the enemy, the pilots never hesitated to give battle whenever the enemy appeared.

Reinforcement Plan:

15. Early in the new year, I visited Cairo in order to discuss the question of reinforcement which was then under revision. Operations in the Western Desert were being brought to a successful conclusion and it was hoped that, by the time the weather conditions had improved in Greece so as to allow occupation of more aerodromes, it would be possible to spare additional squadrons from the Middle East Command. The reinforcement plan envisaged a total force in Greece of fourteen squadrons and I intimated that I would be prepared to start accepting the additional squadrons by January 15th. It was hoped that the whole programme would be complete by April 15th. In planning the reinforcement programme, I again endeavoured to get permission to use the aerodromes in the Salonika area, some of which had remained generally serviceable throughout the winter and could be occupied forthwith. The Germans, however, had commenced their infiltration into Roumania, and the Greek Government were particularly anxious to avoid giving them any idea that we had any hostile intentions in Macedonia which could be directed only against German interests.

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The Greek Air Force.

16. As I have stated already in this report, the Greek Air Force had suffered severe casualties in the early stages of the war and by the end of the year, it was reduced to a mere token force of a few serviceable operational aircraft. Promises of the provision of modern fighter aircraft had been received from the U.S.A. and the British Government had agreed also to supply aircraft as and when they became available. Whilst admiring the esprit de corps and enthusiasm of the officers and airmen of the Greek air force, I considered that operationally they had a lot to learn before they could get full value out of really modern aircraft. Similarly, from the maintenance point of view, a considerable amount of re-organisation was necessary before they would be able to maintain a reasonable degree of serviceability. As these American and British aircraft would be provided presumably at the expense of the R.A.F. reinforcement or expansion programme, I was determined to do all I could to ensure that full use was made of them. I had previously discussed the whole problem with H.M. the King of Greece and the Prime Minister and had made the suggestion to them that a British Mission of qualified R.A.F. officers and airmen should be appointed to help them in the reconstruction of their flying service. They welcomed the suggestion and in due course a mission was provided and the work of reorganising the Greek air force on modern lines was commenced. In addition to their primary role, the Mission undertook also to reconnoitre and supervise the work on all the new aerodromes which it was desired to use in spring and much valuable work they did in this respect.

Offer of British Expeditionary Force

17. Early in January, conferences were held to discuss the possibility of sending a British expeditionary force to Greece but the Greek General Staff, on learning the limited size of the force that could be made available at the time, decided that its presence would only tend to provoke Germany whilst it was not strong enough to be able to provide any very material support.

Battle for Valona

18. The Greek General Staff now realised that, if as seemed probable the Germans intended to make a move through the Balkans, they might be faced in the spring with a campaign on two fronts. They therefore considered it essential that every effort should be made to bring the Italian campaign to an end before such an eventuality arose, or at any rate to shorten their front in Albania as much as possible so as to have troops available to strengthen their front in Macedonia. They appreciated that an advance to a line north of Valona would certainly accomplish the latter and might conceivably, in view of the low morale of the Italians at that time, achieve the former. Consequently, early in February, the Greek armies in Albania started a fierce offensive in the direction of Valona. The preliminary attacks were successful and a certain amount of progress was made. Bad weather, however, intervened and, although the Greek soldiers fought with their customary heroic disregard of danger, the Italians were able to bring up reinforcements and the advance was held up just north of Tepelene.

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Change of Air Policy.

19. This battle for VALONA is interesting from the air point of view in as much as a change of policy was forced upon us. Hitherto, my bombing offensive had been directed almost entirely upon lines of communication, ports and aerodromes to the rear, and with the limited means at my disposal was, I think, instrumental in reducing the flow of reinforcements and supplies to the Italian armies in the field. When discussing this new operation both with H.M. the King and the Commander-in-Chief, they stressed the vital importance of a success, particularly as the morale of the nation had recently been badly shaken by the death of their devoted Prime Minister, General Metaxas. They pointed out that the Greek soldiers on the front had experienced a severe winter and, although full of fight were not too well off for munitions and supplies. Consequently, it was essential that they should have the utmost encouragement and support that could be provided. This could best be given by my bomber force being used in close support of the Greek attack. I produced all the stock arguments against this form of co-operation and stressed the fact that by bombing enemy communications leading to the battlefield a greater degree of help would be given to their troops fighting the actual battle. However, they reminded me that the morale of some of the Greek soldiers had been shaken severely by enemy bombing attacks and that the success of the whole operation might depend on the stimulus afforded by seeing the Italians treated in the same way. I therefore acceded to their requests.

Reorganisation of Command.

20. It was obvious that, if successful close support was to be provided, a certain reorganisation of my forces was necessary. It was quite out of the question to attempt to keep in touch with a fluctuating battle in Albania from a headquarters in Athens, and if immediate and constant support was to be given, my aircraft must operate nearer the front. Accordingly, I formed a wing headquarters in the area of operations and moved part of my bomber force to a landing ground which was found to be sufficiently dry close to the front. For the first few days, until road communication could be established, this landing ground was provisioned by air. I delegated the command and operation of all the bomber aircraft engaged in this operation and a fighter squadron to the commander of the wing, who was in constant touch with the Greek commander conducting the land operations. From a purely local and spectacular point of view, this form of co-operation was an instant and complete success. The morale of the Greek soldiers was raised considerably and I received fulsome praise and appreciation of the work carried out by the pilots. I was even approached by one divisional commander who implored me to order my pilots not to fly so low over the Italians for fear they would be shot down. Our efforts were made much of in official communiques and I think that, during this particular period, the prestige of the R.A.F. was higher in the minds of the Greek nation than at any other period during our stay. I felt the whole time, however, that this high regard was based on false premises for, although we were invigorating our friends, we were misemploying our aircraft. Later events proved this to be the case. If the weather had been kinder, the Greeks might have succeeded in attaining their objective but heavy falls of snow and rain held up their progress and early in March, the Italians who had been able to assemble reinforcements, staged a heavy counter attack which, although held by the Greek forces, destroyed all hopes of capturing Valona.

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Actually, even if we had employed our bomber force solely on ports of disembarkation in Albania, I doubt very much whether we could have interfered to any great extent with the flow of Italian reinforcements. Our available bomber force was small, the weather was bad and it was clear that, after their recent defeat in Cyrenaica, the Italians were determined to avoid another reverse which might have had disastrous results on the nation as a whole. Freed from the necessity of supporting their North African front, they had the troops available and under the conditions prevailing at the time it would have been difficult to prevent their arrival in Albania.

#### Arrival of Hurricane Aircraft.

21. During the latter part of this period, an event of considerable importance concerning our fighter strength occurred. The first six Hurricane aircraft appeared in Greece. Up till now, the pilots in our two fighter squadrons had been doing grand work with their Gladiators but with the gradual appearance of faster and better types of Italian aircraft, they were finding themselves at a disadvantage and their re-equipment with a more modern type was most welcome. The first appearance of these well known fighter aircraft over Athens was greeted with the greatest enthusiasm by the local population and it was not long before they justified fully their reputation of being first class fighting aircraft. On their first sortie over the lines on February 20th., they shot down four enemy aircraft and on 28th. February, in company with a formation of Gladiators, destroyed 27 enemy aircraft without a single loss to themselves. This fight, which was the biggest ever fought in the air in Albania, was staged over the Greek lines in full view of both armies. All the enemy aircraft destroyed were confirmed from the ground and caused the greatest jubilation.

#### MARCH/APRIL, 1941.

#### Decision to send a British expeditionary force.

22. The opening of this final phase of the campaign in Greece was notable for the decision taken at long last to send a British expeditionary force to the country. The Germans had by now completed their subjugation of Roumania and were repeating their customary penetration tactics this time into Bulgaria. The usual stories of the arrival of tourists and reports of preparations being carried out on aerodromes and lines of communication had been coming in for some time and it was all too clear that it was only a matter of time before the German armies would be ensconced on the Greek northern frontier. The attitude of the Yugoslavs, on whom the defence of the northern Greek territory depended so much, was strictly non-committal and unsatisfactory. The Greeks, realising fully the seriousness of the situation, were in no doubts that, if they allowed British fighting troops to enter their country, war with Germany was ultimately unavoidable. To their lasting credit, however, they preferred to accept such a situation rather than have to submit when the time came to a tame capitulation in face of overwhelming force. In consequence of this decision, a British force was rapidly assembled in Egypt and the first troops started to arrive in Greece on the 7th. of March.

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23. I do not propose to give a description of the dispositions or activities of this force, which presumably are included in detail in the G.H.Q.'s report, except in so far as they affect the air operations in my command. The general role of this force was to support the Greek armies against a German threat from the north and much discussion took place as to where this help could best be given. It was eventually decided that, owing to the shortage of time available before it was considered that Germany's preparations would be completed and to the doubtful attitude of Yugo-Slavia, it would be unwise to move up to the Greek-Bulgarian frontier. Arrangements were therefore made for a defensive line to be prepared and occupied in suitable country west of Salonika, covering the LARISSA plain.

#### Preparations for the Arrival of the B.E.F.

24. As time was all important now, everything had to be subordinated to get this defensive position prepared and the force assembled. Engineering works on aerodromes which were not of immediate importance had to be stopped so that camps could be constructed, roads repaired, and all the preparations necessary to receive the force could be made. Similarly, in view of the necessity to avoid congestion at the docks, we were forced to use all our available transport to move the incoming munitions, stores, etc. On the arrival of G.H.Q., the army services which had hitherto been under my command, together with the appropriate army staff officers, were transferred to Army control. These commitments and re-arrangements meant a certain amount of disorganisation in my command. The weather, however, was now improving and the landing grounds in the plains and valleys drying up. Therefore, no very great delays in our arrangements occurred.

#### Reorganisation of R.A.F.

25. The arrival of the British expeditionary force and the establishment of a new front meant a further reorganisation of my force and a readjustment of my slender resources. Although very few reinforcements had arrived as yet and my pilots and air crews were beginning to feel the strain of heavy and continuous operations throughout the winter months, an additional burden was now thrust upon us. I still had to provide air support for the Greeks who were being ferociously attacked in Albania by the Italians, spurred on by the presence of MUSCOLINI himself. I had to provide air escorts for incoming convoys, also some form of air defence for the ports of disembarkation of British troops which were becoming alarmingly congested. I had to deliver occasional attacks on the DODECANESE ISLANDS to reduce the scale of enemy attacks on convoys which were becoming embarrassingly frequent and finally, I had to allocate a portion of my force to support the position in process of occupation by British troops. I attach as Appendix "A" to this report a memorandum which I issued on 18th. March, pointing out the very parlous condition we were in at that time and describing how I proposed to attempt an almost impossible task. Apart from the fact that all my squadrons were much below strength in serviceable aircraft, due to the heavy casualties we had suffered and the unavoidable inability to keep us supplied with replacements, the re-equipping of my fighter squadrons with Hurricanes was not proceeding as rapidly as I had hoped. Furthermore, the arrival of reinforcing squadrons was not keeping pace with the programme decided upon and those that did arrive were much below establishment in aircraft and equipment. In spite of these difficulties and disappointments, however, I still hoped that time would be on our side and that, when the German attack developed, we would be in a reasonable state of preparedness to meet it.

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The Battle of Cape MATAPAN.

26. On the 26th. of March, a refreshing interlude to our troubles on land was afforded by the naval engagement off Cape MATAPAN. All our bombing squadrons took part and largely by their efforts in delaying the Italian naval force, the Mediterranean fleet was able to bring the enemy to battle and inflict on them a smashing defeat.

The Fleet Air Arm.

27. At this juncture it is appropriate to mention the good work carried out by the Fleet Air Arm operating from western Greece. Six Swordfish aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm arrived in Greece on 11th. March and proceeded to PARANYSIA from where they operated against VALONA and DURANZO harbours. Their task was beset by various difficulties. The high country surrounding VALONA made a night approach awkward and hazardous while it was almost impossible to get into the bay undetected. At DURANZO, the water was shallow and the approaches were thereby limited. Pilots reported the presence of night fighters over VALONA. However, in spite of all this, several ships were sunk and many more hit and damaged during the period the Fleet Air Arm were with us.

Germany declares War on Yugo-Slavia and Greece.

28. In the meantime, events were moving rapidly in the Balkans. While the Regent of Yugo-Slavia was signing away the freedom of his country, a coup d'etat was staged and we had a new ally. Large German forces had crossed the DANUBE and were moving into BULGARIA. Time was clearly running short. In spite of every effort, we were only able to arrange one so called "staff conference" with the Yugo-Slavs which did little beyond providing an opportunity for mutual criticism as to our state of unpreparedness for war, before the Germans declared war against both Greece and Yugo-Slavia on April 6th., and commenced invading both countries.

THE GERMAN INVASION.

29. I propose to deal with the air campaign against the German air force in somewhat greater detail than the operations hitherto carried out in Albania. I do this because I believe there are valuable lessons to be learnt which, owing to the great disparity between the British and German air forces in this campaign, are shown up in high relief. In addition, our air force gave support to a British army which may, perhaps, consider that the major cause which forced it to withdraw from its positions and eventually evacuate Greece altogether, lay in the lack of this very air support. I was fully aware that the air forces at my disposal could not give the support which the army desired and which we would like to have given. Although I stressed the fact, the full consequences were perhaps not clearly recognised by the army. I feel, however, that if various aspects of our air inferiority are discussed, a more complete comprehension of the issues which are at stake may be gained, and that we may thereby pave the way to a better mutual understanding between the Services, a state of affairs which is essential for the efficient conduct of modern war.

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Organisation of R.A.F. Component:

30. At the time when Germany commenced the invasion, my force was organised as follows:

A Western Wing ... consisting of one bomber and one fighter squadron (Gladiator) supporting the Greeks in Albania.

An Eastern Wing... consisting of two bomber and one Hurricane fighter squadrons supporting the Anglo-Greek forces facing the German advance. The squadrons of this wing occupied landing grounds on the Larissa plain which, although still soft after the winter rains, was now drying rapidly.

In the Athens area, I had one bomber squadron and one fighter squadron in process of re-arming with Hurricanes. Expressed in terms of aircraft my total serviceable strength in the country was some eighty aircraft, to which were opposed, according to all reports, approximately 800 German aircraft on the Eastern front (Bulgaria and Roumania) and 160 Italian aircraft based in Albania plus 150 based in Italy but operating over Albania and Greece, mainly from advanced landing grounds in Albania.

Disposition of Squadrons in Eastern Wing:

31. The first problem with which I was faced in forming the Eastern Wing was that of disposing the air forces I could make available. My intention was to provide each squadron with a base aerodrome and at least one and if possible two satellite landing grounds.

The location of the fighter squadron was influenced by its role. This was threefold:

- (a) to protect the base area, which included the army L. of C., the port of Voles and our aerodromes in the LARISSA plain.
- (b) to provide fighter escort to our bombers, and
- (c) to deal with enemy fighter aircraft in the battle area.

LARISSA aerodrome was the most suitable from the geographical and communications point of view and was one of the few aerodromes which was serviceable for all but a comparatively short period during the winter. Accordingly, the fighter squadron was based there with a satellite on a piece of suitable ground 7 miles to the west. At LARISSA the camp was well dispersed at the opposite end of the aerodrome to the hangars, which would be likely to attract bombing attack. Aircraft pens of sandbags capable of taking Hurricanes, though open at the top, were constructed in dispersed positions.

32. As regards the two bomber squadrons, it was my original intention to station them at ALIYROS, where I hoped they would be sufficiently far back to be immune from escorted bomber raids and low flying fighter attack. Unfortunately, the Greek Air Force were already in occupation of this ground and I did not consider it safe for reasons of congestion to station more than one squadron there. The other squadron had to be sited temporarily at LARISSA, pending the discovery of a more suitable ground. This was found eventually at NIAMATA, which in spite of a nearby marsh and consequent malarial infection and in spite of the poor strategical position it occupied in the event of the

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withdrawal of an army to the Olympus line, was the only other which possessed a satisfactory surface and was suitable for night flying in the whole area north of ATTICA.

Thus the Blenheim squadrons were located at ALMYROS and NIAMATA. At each aerodrome every endeavour was made to gain the maximum dispersion of aircraft and encampments. Except at LARISSA, the limits of the squadron camps lay at least a kilometre from the aerodrome. Aircraft were widely dispersed off the aerodrome at ALMYROS, but at NIAMATA this was hindered by a dyke and drainage ditch which protected the aerodrome from the marsh and lake beyond.

33. The one army co-operation squadron which arrived as the German attack developed I stationed at KAZAKLIAR, where it was suitably sited for meeting the army needs. Unfortunately, however, this squadron rarely had more than one Hurricane serviceable at a time and, since the remainder of its aircraft were Lysanders, which it was quite impossible to use in the face of enemy air opposition, the squadron did very little useful work.

34. It should be realised that the German invasion of Greece started at a time when very few landing grounds were fit for use on account of rain. They were just beginning to dry and had the attack been delayed for even a week, we would at least have had several more satellite landing grounds at our disposal. As it was, the change in the weather favoured the Germans.

#### Position of Eastern Wing H.Q.

35. Considerations influencing the location of the Eastern Wing Headquarters were:

- (a) ability of the wing commander to make quick personal contact with force commander.
- (b) reliability of communications.
- (c) ease of access to operational squadrons under wing control.
- (d) reasonable propinquity to aerodrome.

The overriding consideration in locating wing Headquarters supporting the army on this front was that it should be close enough to Force H.Q. to allow the wing commander and the force commander to be within easy personal touch. It was considered undesirable, however, to locate the H.Q. beside Force H.Q., since the combined encampment would be of excessive proportions, difficult to conceal from the air, marked by deeply worn tracks, congested with vehicles and unwieldy to move.

The fully established wing headquarters failed to arrive in Greece by the outbreak of the campaign and, therefore, after consultation with the force commander, I decided to locate the skeleton wing headquarters beside Force H.Q. at ELLABON. The wing commander lived in the force commander's mess and so the closest liaison was formed.

(continued)

Control of Squadrons:

36. At the end of March, the Army signals detachment attached to wing headquarters was asked to link up all the aerodromes which were eventually used with direct lines to wing headquarters at ELLASON. Owing, apparently, to a lack of wire, this was not possible and alternative but inefficient channels were provided. Throughout the operations, land line communications were extremely poor. Although the wing had a direct line to LARISSA 25 miles of it consisted of field telephone wire and the utmost difficulty was experienced in using this line at all. The Force line or the Fullerphone to the main exchange was used whenever possible. Communication to ALMYROS was not possible from ELLASON. It was therefore decided to establish a system of relaying operation orders in code by telephone from the wing commander at ELLASON to LARISSA, where they were further transmitted as appropriate either direct to the fighter squadron at LARISSA or by telephone to the bomber squadrons at NIAMATA or ALMYROS. For this purpose, an officer was permanently standing by at LARISSA to relay operation orders.

Communication from LARISSA to NIAMATA only twelve miles away was reliable, but to ALMYROS it was most unsatisfactory, largely due to the fact that the Air Defence Centre used the ALMYROS line for reporting enemy aircraft. As the campaign proceeded, so the demands both of the wing and of the Air Defence Centre augmented until finally it took as much as five to six hours to pass a priority telephone message from LARISSA to ALMYROS. Thus it was decided to use the squadron at NIAMATA for any fleeting targets which presented themselves, while the squadron at ALMYROS carried out direct support operations, the need for which could be foreseen some hours previously.

Organisation of Fighter Defence:

37. The Greek observer system consisting of posts with sub posts radiating from each and linked to air defence centres by telephone operated with a certain degree of success and various interceptions of Italian aircraft had been made over the LARISSA area.

A fighter operations room was established at LARISSA and was run by the squadron stationed there. Depending on alternative duties, aircraft were standing by throughout the hours of daylight. It was, however, inevitable to leave the L. of C. and base area unprotected when the fighters were required for escort duty or protective duties over the forward troops.

The system worked well, although there was little enemy air activity during the first few days of the campaign. When, however, the withdrawal of our troops began, the personnel manning the posts of the observer system had to withdraw and consequently the system broke down.

Liaison with Force H.Q.

38. The wing commander visited the force commander in his office each morning as a routine and daily discussions were held in the force commander's mess both with him and his B.G.S. the force commander was fully informed of the air situation and made no excessive demands upon our resources. Without exception, the utmost was done to meet the requirements of the army and every request for reconnaissance made by the force commander or the B.G.S. was followed by a faithful endeavour to carry out that task. At the outset, however, weather was a serious hindrance and in spite of the most frequent and determined attempts, many failures had to be reported.

(continued)

The choice of targets for the bombers, the ways and means of providing fighter patrols over our forward troops, the question of leaving the base area unprotected whilst fighters escorted bombers or patrolled over the line, ground strafing of M.T., reconnaissance, and every other aspect of the air situation were discussed, and complete agreement was expressed with the direction and operations of the squadrons supporting the army. Neither the force commander nor the B.G.S. permitted themselves to indicate more than a general plan in view of the rapidly changing situation and they always expressed their agreement in the suggested methods of meeting any particular circumstances.

In addition to the personal liaison between the force and wing commanders, an A.L.O. kept in constant touch with the G Staff, watching and reporting every development in the situation. It is difficult to know how air forces could be operated in closer co-operation with the military forces than was in fact the case during the opening days of the Balkan campaign. Whatever shortcomings there may have been in the support given by the air forces, they certainly cannot be attributed to lack of co-operation or to lack of the most faithful endeavours of our pilots. At every available opportunity, aircraft of this wing were doing their utmost to carry out the multifarious tasks which were required of them.

#### 6th.-9th. April - The German Advance:

39. On the morning of the 6th. April, the German forces were on the march. The bulk of the enemy moved west from the STRUMA valley, filtering by all available roads into each valley and gorge, inundating every plain with their swiftly moving forces. The first air reports indicated that an attack was being made upon MT. BELES and the RUFEL PASS. Simultaneously, our reconnaissance aircraft reported movement of M.T. on the road west from PETRICH.

It was certain that this movement would be covered by fighter patrols and the fighters were sent off to carry out a sweep over the road and over the Greeks on MT. BELES and in the RUFEL PASS. Twelve Hurricanes met twenty Me.109's and our fighters shot down five without loss to themselves. This disposed of any anxiety or over cautiousness which the squadron commander of the fighters had felt about the change over from Italians to Germans. Whereas, at the outset, the squadron commander expressed the view that his aircraft could not operate in formations of less than twelve, he now agreed that formations of six would be able to escort Blenheims formations across the line. This meant that the base area only had to be left completely unprotected when the Hurricanes went off in strength to patrol over our forward troops. In the circumstances, the wing commander considered it a reasonable division of fighter strength.

Meanwhile, reconnaissances of the STRUMA valley were being carried out. During the course of that night SOPIA, GORNA DJUMAYA, SHITLI and PETRICH were bombed by Wellington and Blenheim aircraft both from ATHENS and from the LARISSA plain. These raids were most successful and pilots on their return reported good results. The weather was bad on the following day and no reconnaissance was possible, but it was anticipated that considerable concentrations of enemy M.T. would be found at STRUMITSA. Late in the afternoon, in spite of severe weather, some of our aircraft got through and bombed the rich target presented by the heavy congestion of German M.T. confined to the road in this area by marshes and watercourses and the surrounding mountainous country. The escort of Hurricanes destroyed a Dornier. A large proportion of the German forces moving west against the

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Yugo-Slav armies had to pass through STRUMITSA as well as all the forces advancing on SALONIKA and those about to deploy themselves before our positions on the MT. OLYMPUS region. Consequently, as many heavy attacks as possible were made against targets in this area.

On the following day, the bad weather continued but in spite of it, we were able to get some of our reconnaissance machines through, and again in the evening we bombed enemy H.Q. in considerable concentration near STRUMITSA.

Since the army co-operation squadron was short of aircraft and since it was considered expedient to avoid sending unescorted Blenheims on long reconnaissances, the fighter squadron was asked to help out with reconnaissance. This squadron was thereafter frequently asked to provide recce aircraft, and although the pilots had had no reconnaissance training, they carried out the most valuable work throughout this period of great stress.

The wing commander had received an appeal to give bombing support to the Greeks who were cut off in the SALONIKA area. On consulting the force commander as to the relative danger to the army of the various points which the German advance was threatening, the wing commander decided, in view of the limited opportunities for air operations offered by the weather and in view of his limited air resources, not to dissipate any effort on a front which was already lost in spite of the gallant action still being fought in the RUMEL area by the Greeks. Nevertheless, the powerful bombing attacks against STRUMITSA were bound to have a direct effect upon the situation in the area of KILKIS and SALONIKA, since German columns passing through STRUMITSA and south to LAKE DOIRAN were attempting to encircle the MT BLES POSITION.

On the following day, the weather was again very bad. From the information available, however, it was now clear that very considerable German forces were passing through STRUMITSA, some advancing south by LAKE DOIRAN were already in or around SALONIKA, whilst the greater part continued west and north west and were threatening the MONASTIR GAP.

The situation was beginning to unfold, contact was expected shortly on the OLYMPUS line but anxiety was felt on account of the ineffectiveness of the Yugo-Slav resistance and the lack of information as to the situation in the north. Every effort was made by our air force to alleviate the pressure on the Yugo-Slav army in order to give them time to withdraw in front of the highly mobile German forces, and to take up strong positions in the mountains and gorges.

#### 9th. - 15th. April. 1st. Withdrawal.

40. Communications between Force H.Q. and Wing H.Q. to Athens were now becoming extremely poor and I was virtually out of touch not only with the wing commander but with the G.O.C., with whom it was essential for me to be in constant communication. Accordingly, I sent an officer of air rank to take over operations in the forward area. The air officer took over at a time when, in view of the intention of the army to withdraw to the OLYMPUS line, plans were being drawn up to withdraw the ground party of the squadron of Blenheims at NIAMATA and to use it only as an advanced landing ground.

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During the next few days, until the complete evacuation of the LARISSA plain on the 15th., enemy H.F. columns and concentrations on the roads between PRILIP and BISOULJ and in the MOUNTAIN area were bombed successfully by our aircraft. Our army had had little time to prepare strong positions in this area, which they had hoped would be protected for some time by the resistance of the Yugo-Slavs. A heavy burden was therefore thrown upon our air forces which now virtually had to make up for the time lost by the caving in of the Yugo-Slav forces. No stone was left unturned to delay the enemy and to shield our ground forces. Meanwhile, our army was engaged in fighting a rearguard action in the areas around ANKHTALIAN and KLEINOURA.

As soon as the withdrawal to the BILIKASH line complete when, on account of the threat to its left flank, it became necessary for the army to make a further withdrawal to the THIMPHYRE line. Consequently, all H.F. units on the LARISSA plain had to be withdrawn at once with the utmost speed along roads which were already congested. At the same time, the H.F. continued to throw all its power into delaying tactics.

On 14th. April, the weather improved and German air activity intensified. The Germans had brought their fighters forward to the PRILIP and MONASTIR areas, where their engineers had prepared the necessary landing strips. The German air force was mainly directed in close support of their army and heavy dive bombing attacks were made against our troops. Our Hurricanes, escorting our bombers in attacking enemy H.F. on the roads near PRILIP and disorganising his lines of communication, shot down many enemy aircraft.

41. On 15th. April, the main effort of the German air force was directed against our air force, which had been delaying their military operations and had taken toll of their aircraft. Large numbers of short range fighters made their appearance over the LARISSA plain and ground strafed H.F. In spite of H.F., every aircraft of the Blenheim squadron located there was destroyed. Owing to the breakdown of the Greek observer system, our fighters were at a hopeless disadvantage. Then, on one occasion, Me.109's appeared over their aerodrome at LARISSA without any warning, three Hurricanes were attacked whilst taking off and two were shot down. The third shot down one Me.109. Although, when our fighters were able to get off, they played havoc with the enemy, the situation was obviously untenable. I was present on the LARISSA aerodrome whilst this attack was in progress and I ordered the squadrons to withdraw to the Athens area forthwith.

#### The Albanian Front.

42. Meanwhile, the wide manoeuvre of the German forces advancing swiftly through the mountain passes north west and west of SKOPJE was developing. Their intention was to force contact with the helpless Italian forces near TIRANA in northern Albania and to threaten the right flank of the Greek armies in Albania from the LAKE OKRASHA area. The Greeks, who had fought so valiantly against the Italians throughout the winter months, were hardly in a position to withstand the extra pressure of the German forces. Withdrawal from Albania in the ROJITSA area had been considered expedient by British commanders before the German invasion began. However, the Greeks did not take a sufficiently strategic view of warfare to allow such a withdrawal to be carried out without seriously affecting the morale of the army. This was especially the case when the territory which they would have to give up had been wrested from the despised Italian invaders. To give up their acquisition of their own free will and to see it fall once more into the hands of the Italians was for the

(continued)

Greek fighting a lidier in the line an intolerable idea. When in fact, the withdrawal was eventually forced upon them, it was too late for the Greeks, reliant upon mule and bullock-cart transport, to conduct an orderly retreat. Morale and organization collapsed. The Greek army commander at YANNINA capitulated to the Germans.

As the situation in this area deteriorated, it became increasingly obvious that it was necessary to withdraw the R.A.F. Western wing, consisting of one Blenheim and one Gladiator squadron. This was successfully carried out in spite of difficulties which arose as the result of numbers of Yugo-Slav aircraft and personnel arriving at KASTRYLLIA aerodrome and requiring fuel and food right up to the last moment.

#### 18th - 24th. April. 2nd. Withdrawal.

45. At this juncture, I decided to abolish the Eastern wing and take over control of all operations from Athens. I left an R.A.F. officer at Force H.Q. to act as liaison between the army commander in the field and myself. Later, when Force handed over the direction of the withdrawal to Anzac Corps, this officer was attached there. The army commander desired only reconnaissance and fighter protection which we did all we could to provide.

Throughout the withdrawal, the army co-operation squadron carried out what reconnaissance they could. After they had evacuated KAKKILAK, north of LARISSA, they operated their few aircraft from KAKKILAK, which by this time was serviceable. Later they operated from KASTRYLLIA, just behind the METSOVLAK line. Here there was a Greek Gladiator squadron which was ground strafed and destroyed as soon as the Germans were able to locate their fighters on the aerodromes on the LARISSA plain. The army co-operation squadron's reconnaissance were not on the aerodrome at the time of the ground strafing and so luckily escaped, but I considered it wiser to bring them back to the Athens area.

In view of the complete numerical superiority enjoyed by the enemy, I decided to operate my Blenheim squadrons by night as much as possible in efforts to delay as far as lay in our power, the enemy's advance. But after the decision to evacuate had been taken, the whole weight of the German air force was turned on the Athens area and there was no alternative but to save what air crews and material remained. These squadrons ferried the remainder of the personnel of their squadrons to Crete and carried out their instructions with discipline and courage in the face of great peril.

#### Direction of Bombing Efforts:

46. As far as the direction of bombing is concerned, the operations against the Germans followed four clearly defined phases:

The first phase, lasting for about two days, was the disclosure of the enemy plan prior to gaining contact with our troops. During this phase, bombing was directed at previously arranged targets in the STRUMF valley, including PSTRICH, SIMITLI, GORDA BETHAYE and SOPHA.

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During the second phase, in which the direction of the German advance was recognized and in which every possible effort was made to alleviate pressure thru wa against the Yugo-Slav armies in the west and the Greek armies in the Salonika area, bombing was directed against supply columns and concentrations of enemy M.F. at the bottleneck around BRUNITSA, where the German forces divided into two columns.

The third phase, in which a serious threat developed against the British armies in the region of the MONASTIR gap, was devoted to the bombing of bottlenecks, railway junctions, stations, bridges, defiles and concentrations of enemy M.F. on roads leading towards the MONASTIR GAP, from KROPLJE, VELBA, TRILJE to BITOLJ.

The fourth phase was the direction of all our air effort in hindering and delaying the advancing Germans to allow our army to conduct a successful withdrawal. All our resources were thrown into the task of alleviating the pressure on our forces in order to allow them the maximum amount of time to withdraw and to prepare new positions.

Targets were chosen at points where it was calculated that the effect of dislocation would be most widespread amongst advancing German columns and yet close enough to the rear of the German fighting troops to have the maximum immediate effect upon the progress of their advance.

It is impossible to calculate the degree of success which this policy attained, but German prisoners who fell into our hands told wonderful tales of the heavy bombing which they had suffered from the R.A.F. throughout their advance. On the night 14/15th., our Wellingtons created such chaos at VELBA and broke the bridge across the VALBA. A glance at the map will at once show the importance of a dislocation in the German L. of C. at this point. It is the hinge upon which one, perhaps the greatest, of the main German drives depended.

The continual bombing of M.F. which presented some of the best targets which our Blenheim pilots, accustomed to such targets as dispersed vehicles in the desert, had even known, caused much confusion amongst the enemy.

#### Withdrawal of Fighter Squadrons.

45. The fighters were withdrawn to the Thess area, since no aerodromes north of this was free from ground strafing. The constant lack of intermediary aerodromes made it inevitable that, if our fighters were placed on an aerodrome from which they could give protection to our troops, they were in imminent danger of destruction by ground strafing as soon as they were on the ground. If, on the other hand, they were placed beyond the range of ground strafing, they were unable to protect our troops and the tightly packed columns of M.F. withdrawing along the roads. The utmost efforts were made to give the maximum protection to our continually harassed troops. All our machines were working to maximum capacity. Many of our pilots were working at extreme range, challenging untold odds and at times pursuing enemy aircraft engaged in ground strafing our troops after they had used up their ammunition.

On 19th. April, approximately 100 dive bombers and fighters attacked the Thess area; my whole force of fighters of fifteen Hurricane intercepted them, bringing down a total of 22 enemy aircraft confirmed and 8 unconfirmed for a loss of five Hurricanes. Small as our losses were, they were crippling to our small force.

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Even after having been shot down, our fighter pilots would immediately take the air in aircraft which had been riddled with bullets and by all normal standards were totally unserviceable. The courage of these men never failed nor looked like failing. Each day their fellows died, each day they stepped into their battered aircraft, not without a sensation of fear but quite undimmed. Each man was aware of his great responsibility in the face of great odds.

#### Final Evacuation of Air Forces.

46. On 22nd. April, I sent the remaining Hurricanes to AROOS. From here, I intended that they should cover the evacuation of the British Army, but the German air attack became so concentrated, that after a number of Hurricanes had been destroyed on the ground on April 24th., the remainder were ordered to leave for CRETE. In CRETE, Blenheim fighter patrols were organised to cover the ships evacuating the troops from the beaches. These escorts were maintained throughout the evacuation without respite, and I consider it was due largely to their efforts that such a large proportion of the total British forces in Greece were evacuated.

47. A reference to the evacuation would not be complete without a tribute being paid to the flying boats, both of the R.A.F. and the R.C.A.F. These boats carried out magnificent work ferrying parties of airmen and soldiers both from the mainland to CRETE and from CRETE to EGYPT. A number of their flights were carried out in conditions of the utmost danger and throughout the pilots and crews displayed the utmost gallantry and devotion to duty. From the point of view of interest, the record number of personnel carried in one single Sunderland on one trip was eighty-four.

#### CONCLUSION:

48. The lessons and conclusions to be drawn from a campaign of this description are many, and in Appendix "B" to this report, I have included those which I consider are of the chief interest. In bringing out the various points that come to my mind, I find it difficult to avoid criticising various aspects of service organisation and doctrine. I would like to point out, however, that these criticisms are made in an entirely constructive sense and in the hope that profit may be gained by our experience.

49. Where we are in possession of totally inadequate air forces, there will always be requests from every direction for the air support which in ideal circumstances we would comfortably be able to provide, and which indeed we would be only too pleased to give. In Greece, we had the minimum, and in order to produce any results at all, it was essential that all available force was directed in accordance with a carefully conceived plan. As our bombing forces were inadequate to deal decisive and instantaneous blows on the enemy, then our policy had to be to sustain our small efforts for as long as possible at points where the resultant distraction caused the enemy the utmost embarrassment. This we were able to do in Albania for the Italian air strategy was extremely weak and the numerical odds were only some four or five to one against us. When, however, we had to face the full force of the German onslaught in addition, the odds became too great in spite of the superb gallantry of our pilots and crews.

(continued)

30. In spite of the strategic and tactical disadvantages under which our air forces laboured in Greece, in spite of the great enemy superiority in numbers, and in spite of the weather conditions which there can be no doubt were the worst in which British air forces have had to operate throughout the world, a considerable offensive effort was developed. During the Albanian and German campaigns in Greece, our fighters destroyed 232 enemy aircraft confirmed, and a further 112 unconfirmed. Our bombers operating by day and night dropped 550 tons of bombs on the enemy. There was no indiscriminate or area bombing. Each bomb was carefully aimed in order to obtain the maximum effect to ensure that the efforts required to overcome the disadvantages which beset our air crews were not in vain.

31. The participation of our land forces in the Greek campaign was dictated entirely by political considerations and we were all fully aware of our weaknesses both in the air and on the ground. I have heard certain criticisms made that, under those conditions, we should never have sent a land force to Greece. I attended all the conferences held in Greece to discuss this matter and I would like to say without any hesitation and in the light of subsequent events that in my opinion the decision made was a right one and in accordance with the best traditions of our race. There was always the chance that, in the first place, Germany would respect the neutrality of Yugo-Slavia and that her advancing armies might be delayed sufficiently long to enable our forces to be strengthened and our position made secure. On the other hand, if Yugo-Slavia threw in her lot with us, which eventually she did, it was reasonable to suppose that her soldiers, renowned for their fighting qualities, would prove a tough nut for the Germans to crack and they would be able to protect our left flank. In any case, we would be containing large enemy land forces and air forces at a time when Britain needed a breathing space to perfect her defensive arrangements.

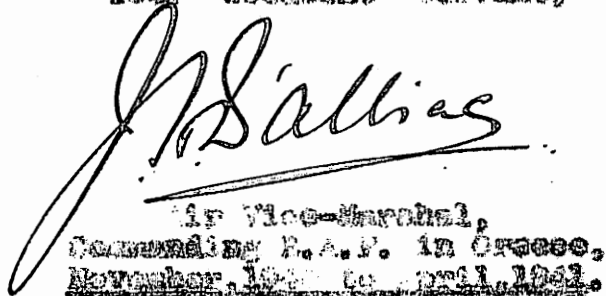
Furthermore, the assistance which we were considering was to be given to a nation which had sacrificed her all in our cause and was herself quite prepared to face complete extinction rather than capitulate. I suggest that it would have been difficult to refuse her this help and our conduct would have most reprehensible in the eyes of our countrymen and those of important neutrals had we failed to do so.

32. Finally, I would like to express on behalf of each individual under my command, my sincere appreciation of the generous hospitality and friendship which were unfailingly shown to us by Greeks in every walk of life. We will never forget the brave and courteous spirit of these people whose kindness and sympathy towards us were no great when we finally had to leave Greece to the occupation of the Germans, as when we arrived in November last in the fever and anxiety of the opening days of the war against Italy. It was with a feeling of deep regret but of profound admiration and affection for this heroic people that we left the shores of Greece.

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58. Under separate cover, I have forwarded to you the names of officers and airmen whom I would particularly like to bring to your notice for their excellent work and devotion to duty during this campaign. I have nothing but praise for all the officers and airmen whom I had the honour to command, whose conduct was at all times exemplary and who, even during periods of the greatest stress, continued to work with that cool and calm efficiency which we have become accustomed to expect from the members of the Service.

I have the honour to be,  
Sir,  
Your obedient servant,

  
Air Vice-Marshal,  
Commanding R.A.F. in Greece,  
November, 1941 to April, 1941.

A P P E N D I X

" A "

APPENDIX "A" TO THE REPORT BY AIR VICE-MARSHAL  
J.H. D'ALBIAC, D.S.O., ON THE OPERATIONS BY THE  
ROYAL AIR FORCE IN GREECE:

NOVEMBER, 1940 to APRIL, 1941.

MEMORANDUM

ON

AIR POLICY IN GREECE, 1941.

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Distribution: H.C.R.A.F.H.E. (3).  
G.H.C.H.E. (2).  
D.A.O.C.B.A.F.G. (1).  
H.Q. "A" Wing. (1).  
H.Q. "B" Wing. (1).  
S.A.S.O.B.A.F.G. (1).  
H.Q. "C" FORCE. (1).  
Ops. Record Book (2).  
File. (1).

Reference: BFG/B/Air.

Headquarters, Royal Air Force, Greece.  
18th. March, 1941.

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## MEMORANDUM ON AIR POLICY, GREECE.

Appendix: Order of Battle, British Air Force and Reinforcement Programme.

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### ROLE OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE IN GREECE.

1. The primary role of the Royal Air Force in Greece has hitherto been the furtherance of the Greek campaign against Italy. The imminent threat of German invasion from the north and the probability of operations developing in Macedonia impose on the R.A.F. the additional task of direct intervention on a new front, besides opening up the possibility of strategic bombing of enemy interests on south-east Europe. To meet these new developments, a readjustment of our available air forces and a reconsideration of our general air policy is necessary.
2. In considering the disposition of the British Air Force units, account must be taken of the Greek Air Force and the extent to which it can assist. In the early days of the war, the Greek Air Force, though small, was quite successful. Owing, however, to casualties and a serious lack of spares for the many varied types of aircraft held, their effort has gradually diminished: and at the present time it is of negligible proportions. It is the intention to re-equip and build up the Greek Air Force with up-to-date British or American aircraft as and when they become available, but for some time to come this force must be considered as of little operational value.
3. Consequently, the Royal Air Force in Greece must, in addition to providing air support for the Anglo Greek forces operating on the Macedonian front, continue to provide the major air support for the campaign in Albania. In other words, fight on two fronts.
4. The attack of strategic targets such as the Roumanian oilfields and important bases in German occupied territory, on the Italian mainland and the Dodecanese Islands must, under existing circumstances, be carried out by heavy bombers operating at night. It is the intention that heavy bomber squadrons will eventually be stationed in Greece for this purpose, but for the time being, owing to accommodation difficulties, detachments for this purpose are made during moonlight periods from squadrons based in Egypt. In addition to their primary role of distance bombing, these detachments could, of course, be diverted to attack suitable targets in direct furtherance of the military campaign should this necessity arise during their periods of detachment in Greece.
5. The squadrons actually stationed in Greece are freed, therefore, largely from distant strategical commitments and may be considered available for direct participation in Anglo Greek military operations. The three main tasks that they must be prepared to undertake are:-
  - (a) Air support in co-operation with the Greek A.F., for the Greek campaign in Albania.
  - (b) Defence of Greece from enemy air attack.
  - (c) Air support for the Anglo-Greek operations in Macedonia.

(continued)

ROYAL AIR FORCES AVAILABLE:

6. Details of the Royal Air Force units now in Greece and those expected to arrive in the near future are given in Appendix "A". Summarised they amount to the following:

		Now.	Additional by 15/4.
Medium Bomber Squadrons.	Blenheim I.	2.	
	Blenheim IV.	2.	1.
Fighter Squadrons.	Gladiators.	1½	
	Hurricanes.	1½	
	Blenheims.	1.	
Army Co-op. Squadrons.	Hurricanes.	Nil.	1.
Coma. Unit.	Lysanders.	Nil.	1.

The aircraft situation in the Middle East is such that replacement of wastage in those squadrons now in Greece and the equipment of those squadrons expected by April 15th., is in doubt and in consequence the serviceability of units is likely to be low if any intensive operations are necessary.

ALLOCATION OF AIR FORCES TO TASKS.7. Greek Campaign in Albania.

The minimum force that can be reasonably allotted to the Albanian front is one squadron of bombers and one squadron of fighters. This force will permit a certain amount of reconnaissance bombing and a few offensive fighter patrols. Assisted by a slowly increasing Greek air effort, these should be sufficient to conduct a purely defensive campaign.

8. Air Defence in Vital Areas.

The full defence of the country from a determined air attack is quite impossible with the fighter strength likely to be at our disposal and it is necessary to determine for which points it is vital to provide air protection. In order of priority of importance, these will probably be:

- (a) Port of Piraeus and the Athens base area.
- (b) Port of Salos and the subsidiary base area.
- (c) Larissa base area.
- (d) Main L. of C. to Macedonian and Albanian fronts.
- (e) Preveza.
- (f) Yannina.

9. To give any useful degree of protection to Piraeus and the Athens area, at least one squadron of modern fighters is necessary. This squadron will be stationed at Eleusis. Salos and Larissa can be covered but only indifferently by one squadron of modern fighters which would be best situated at Larissa. No fighters can be allotted specifically to the defence of lines of communication to the Macedonian front. This commitment must be covered by the fighters at Larissa. Preveza is a problem that can only be dealt with, as it has been to date, by occasional long distance fighter patrols operating from Athens, in the hope that an occasional successful interception will at least have a deterrent effect.

(continued).

The duty will be undertaken by the Blenheim fighter squadron stationed at Eleusis or possibly at Araxos. The protection of Yannina and the forward L. of C. to the Albanian front must be carried out from Yannina aerodrome by the fighter squadron supporting the Albanian campaign.

**10. Macedonian Campaign.**

The requirements of the military forces operating in the Macedonian area are likely to be those normal to an air force operating in direct support of an army and consist of:

- (a) Direct support:
  - (i) Strategical reconnaissance.
  - (ii) Bombing of communications and vital areas.
  - (iii) Fighter escort for (i) and (ii).
- (b) Close support.
  - (i) Bombing of tactical targets.
  - (ii) Offensive and defensive fighter patrols.

After deducting from the forces available in Greece the forces required for the Greek campaign in Albania and the air defence of the country, there are left only two bomber squadrons for the Macedonian operations and no fighter squadrons. It is hoped that this force will be increased in the near future by one further bomber squadron and by the 1st. of April by one fighter squadron.

11. The present aircraft supply position is such, however, that no reliance can be placed on this. Until such time as more fighters become available, fighter support required on the Macedonian front must be limited, therefore, to that which the fighter squadron allocated to Larissa can give. In view of the commitments in the defence of the Volos-Larissa area and the L. of C. this must be extremely small.

12. The allotment of air forces to the three main tasks is, therefore, as follows:

(a) Air support on co-operation with the Greek Air Force for the Greek campaign in Albania:

		<u>NOW.</u>	<u>By April 1st.</u>
Bombers	.....	1 sq.	1 sq.
Fighters	.....	1 sq.	1 sq.

(b) Air support for the Anglo-Greek operations in Macedonia:

		<u>NOW.</u>	<u>By April 1st.</u>
Bombers	.....	2 sq.	3 sq.
Fighters	.....	Nil @	1 sq. ?
Army Co - op.	.....	Nil.	1 sq. ?

@ Fighters at Larissa can give support.

(c) Defence of Greece from enemy air attack:

Fighters:

Hurricanes	.....	1 Plt. Eleusis, 1 sq. Larissa.
Gladiators	.....	1 Plt. Eleusis +
Blenheims	.....	1 sq. Eleusis.

+ The re-equipment of 60 Sq. from Gladiator to Hurricane now half completed has been held up indefinitely. It has one flight Hurricanes, one flight Gladiators.

LOCATION OF R.A.F. SQUADRONS:

13. The location of the whole force is governed as much by the availability of aerodromes as by operational requirements. The lack of aerodrome facilities and the great need for dispersion requires that the maximum number of squadrons on any one aerodrome is limited to two. In the Larissa area, at the present time, there are only two aerodromes capable of taking two squadrons of either Blenheims or Hurricanes. These are Larissa and Alyros. Even these, particularly Larissa, require considerable work if heavy 'aerodrome' casualties are to be avoided. The full effects of the recent earthquake at Larissa are not yet apparent but first reconnaissance shows serious damage to Kazaklar and Trikala aerodromes. It was hoped to use these as weather improves. It is probable, however, that in the flat country in the Larissa plain an additional L.O. will be found without great difficulty, when, but not until, the dry weather sets in. There are small aerodromes in the forward area at Florina and Kasani and to the east of Larissa, Nea Nychiolo will be available later when work now in hand is completed.

14. The initial layout of units cannot, however, take this into considerations and units must be located on aerodromes now usable. These are Larissa, Alyros and possibly Kasani (but this is subject to reconnaissance) which can only take one squadron. Kasani, if usable, is probably the most convenient for the army co-operation squadron. For administrative as well as operational reasons, the second Hurricane squadron should go to Larissa, Alyros being reserved for bombers.

The Larissa area should therefore be able to accommodate:

At Larissa .....	two Hurricane squadrons.
At Alyros .....	two Blenheim squadrons.
At <u>possibly</u> KASANI.....	one army co-operation squadron.

These units will have to perform all air support duties on the Macedonian front.

ORGANISATION AND COMMAND.

15. In view of the widely separated nature of the whole command, the poor communications that exist in the country, it has been decided to organize the force into two subordinate commands, i.e. a Western Wing containing those units serving the Albanian front and an Eastern Wing those units serving the Macedonian front. In addition, there will be certain units stationed in the Athens area for purposes such as local fighter defence and strategical bombing which, for convenience, will be retained under the direct command of R.A.F. in Greece.

16. The two Wing Commanders in the forward areas will be under the command of the Air Officer Commanding for all purposes and the units placed under their command will be employed in support of the military forces on their respective fronts. It is essential that these Wing Commanders work in the closest possible collaboration with the military commanders for, in addition to controlling the units in their respective wings, they will act as advisers to the military commanders on all questions of air support which they will provide to the utmost of their ability.

AIR LIAISON SECTIONS AND OFFICERS:

17. It is understood that two full A.L.O. sections and additional A.L.O.'s for bomber squadrons form part of the military force and it is suggested that the best value would be obtained by both the military commander and R.A.F. if the following allocation of these sections and officers is adopted:

(continued)

17. (a) Army Co-operation Squadron ... One full A.L.O. section.
- (b) Eastern Wing H.Q. ... One full A.L.O. section.  
This section has the duties of:
- (i) Maintenance of close liaison between the forward Army HQ and the forward RAF Wing.
  - (ii) Control of all A.L.O. Sections and officers with the force.
- (c) No. 115 (B) Squadron ... One or possibly two A.L.O.s attached to this squadron which may be expected to do most of the bomber reconnaissance work.
- (d) No. 11 (B) Squadron ... One A.L.O. or possibly two attached to this squadron, which may be expected to carry out most of the direct support bombing.

18. In addition to the A.L.O.s mentioned in para 17 above, it is hoped that a G.II will be provided for appointment to the A.O.C.'s staff to act as Liaison Officer between Air and Army Headquarters.

CONCLUSION:

19. Owing to the small numbers of B.A.F. squadrons that can be made available, the lack of suitable aerodromes in this country and the fact that we will have to fight on two fronts, it will be apparent that the air support which can be provided at any rate for some time to come will be far below that considered necessary for the efficient conduct of war. It will be essential, therefore, that every effort is made to conserve our resources as much as possible and that air forces are not employed on unsuitable or unremunerative tasks. It is not proposed to lay down any hard and fast limitations to the particular tasks squadrons are to perform. Discretion on this must be left to Wing Commanders on the spot, who will base their plans on military requirements and the circumstances obtaining at the time. As a general guide, however, our experience to date indicates the following roles:

- (a) Strategic reconnaissance ... Blenheim IV's operating singly by day at maximum height.
- (b) Close reconnaissance ... A.C. aircraft (Hurricane).
- (c) Strategic bombing ... Wellington aircraft and Blenheim aircraft operating at night.
- (d) Close bombing ... Blenheim aircraft by day escorted by fighter aircraft.
- (e) Fighter policy ... Offensive patrols, escorts, defence of vital areas.

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Royal Air Force, Greece.

Headquarters,  
Royal Air Force,  
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March, 1941.

APPENDIX "A" TO MEMO EFG/2/Air dated March, 1941.

ORDER OF BATTLE.

	Aerodrome.	Position as at 17th. March. 41	Expected by Apr. 15th. 1941.	Remarks.
ATHENS AREA.	MBENIDI.	84 Sq. (Blen. IS) 1 Flt. 113 Sq. (Blen. IVs).	45 (MB) Squadron. (Blenheim IV's). 113 (MB) Squadron. (Blenheim IV's).	⊙
	ELEUSIS.	80 (F) Squadron. (Blenheims). 90 (F) Squadron. (Gladiators & Hurricanes).	80 (F) Squadron. 90 (F) Squadron.	80 sq. has 1 flt. Gladiators and 1 of Hurricanes as at March 17th.
	HASSANI.	-----	Communication Unit (Lycander (F)) .	
WESTERN WING.	YANNINA.	112 (F) Squadron. (Gladiator).	112 (F) Squadron.	
	PARASYTHIA	111 (MB) Squadron (Blen. I's).	111 (MB) Squadron.	
	GRINI ON. ARA OB.	-----	84 (MB) Squadron.	
EASTERN WING	LARISSA.	83 (F) Squadron. (Hurricane).	____ (F) Squadron (Hurricane). 83 (F) Squadron.	⊙
	ALHYROS	11 (MB) Squadron. (Blenheim IV)	11 (MB) Squadron. 55 (MB) Squadron. (Blenheim IV)	⊙
	KASANI.	-----	306 (AC) Squadron. (Hurricane).	

⊙ ... The arrival of these units is in doubt and cannot be counted on. No account has therefore been taken of them in para. 6 of the memo on "Air Policy in Greece".

LESSONS OF THE GREEK CAMPAIGN.

I. Securing our Bases.

1. One of the outstanding lessons of the Greek campaign seems to be that, as with the Army and the Navy, the first essential of aerial warfare is security of our bases. A situation must be created whereby, depending upon the proportions of the enemy air force, it is uneconomical for him to attempt to attack our air bases by the most decisive methods. These methods are escorted dive bombing attacks and ground strafing attacks by short range fighters during daylight.

2. There are two ways of accomplishing security: firstly, by offensive air action against the enemy aerodromes and secondly, by the formation of an adequate system of defence covering our own. Offensive action against enemy aerodromes, unless we are in overwhelming strength, must always be regarded as a diversion and can only be considered as purely "opportunity" employment of our aircraft. Our main strength must invariably be directed against more lucrative targets. We must, therefore, arrange for an adequate system of air defence covering our bases by day, whenever and as long as the enemy can reach that area. This commitment must be met and provided for before it is possible to send a single aircraft to patrol over our forward troops or to escort our bombers.

3. Once we have a fighter organisation with its observer system and other paraphernalia which can maintain effective defence over our own territory, we can then look to establishing some degree of air superiority over the enemy territory. At no time must this be done at the expense of that fixed organisation securing our air bases. Support will be given to the Army after that fundamental operation of war. The locations of the fighter squadrons which will attempt to establish local and temporary air superiority over the enemy territory enjoy the protection provided by these squadrons engaged in purely area defence duties, securing our bases. Under such conditions, the lack of ability to disperse our aircraft at their bases or to satellite landing grounds becomes of lesser importance in direct ratio to the efficiency of our defence organisation. Eventually it becomes possible to locate our close support bomber squadrons within these air defences, in a position which brings them close to the front line and thereby allows close support bombing to be called upon at short notice. Unless this organisation exists, the bomber squadrons must be placed at all times beyond the range of decisive day attack. If they are not so placed, and we are unable to guard our forward bases, they are open to destruction at any time which the enemy chooses. It is in fact trusting to luck, and in order to increase the chances of being favoured with good fortune, the game of hide and seek is played by dispersal of aircraft on aerodrome and to satellites. This divides our A.A. defences and thus does not increase the opposition which the enemy is going to meet. Therefore, it is not a system of defence but merely of evasion. To operate an air force, we must give it a positive system of defence. Therefore, when deciding upon the composition of an air force component due regard must be given to the essential requirement outlined above - for it is on this that the efficiency of our striking force depends.

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## II. ANTI AIRCRAFT DEFENCES.

1. Another clear lesson of the campaign is that, while the main defence against the air is in the air, light A.A. defence is a vitally necessary complement to our fighter organisation. The low flying attack against our aerodromes is most devastating and it is the low flying aircraft which is most likely to penetrate our air defences system.
2. The light A.A. defence of aerodromes is vital to the maintenance of general air defence and the importance of this task is difficult to overestimate and is out of all proportion to the attention which it now receives. The present scale of A.A. defence is in no way decisive and falls far short of our minimum needs. A much greater fire density is required and possibly a new type of light multiple A.A. weapon will have to be introduced. This must be in large numbers and so protected that the crews cannot quickly be put out of action by the aircraft to which they are supposed to be a menace. Very little value was obtained from the Bofors and Breda guns protecting the aerodromes in Greece. There were in most cases very few, so few that their effect was negligible and not infrequently the crews were forced to take to their trenches at the height of an attack.
3. At the present time, the army are responsible for defence of aerodromes from enemy air attack. The arrangements that they are able and willing to provide are so inadequate that I feel that the time has now arrived for a drastic change of policy. The task of defending aerodromes is not a popular one with the Army and is apt to be regarded as a diversion from their main military role. With the widespread threat of enemy air attack, many calls are made on the army for air defence and it is somewhat natural that the needs of their own service should receive priority. I suggest in order to overcome this difficulty, that the Royal Air Force should take over the responsibility for all light A.A. defence of aerodromes and that a special batch of airmen be trained for this purpose. Further, that such a branch of the Service would provide a suitable field in which air crews (gunners and observers) who are needing a rest from active operations could be usefully employed in n.c.c. capacity. The intimate knowledge of aircraft and air tactics which such a body would soon obtain by close contact with flying personnel and permanent employment in this role would soon result in efficiency and the fact that the units were part of the R.A.F. would enhance their esprit de corps and weld the organisation both of ground and air defence into an efficiently co-ordinated system.
4. Indeed, to carry my contention a step further, I would suggest that the Royal Air Force should accept responsibility for the close defence of their aerodromes against parachute and airborne landings and that for this latter task a special type of heavily armoured slow moving vehicle might be designed. This should be capable of withstanding the effects of the initial "blitz" which usually precedes such operations and should have a very considerable fire power.

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### III. MOVEMENT BY DAY ALONG ROADS.

In spite of the great air superiority of the enemy, our army continued to congest the roads with endless columns of M.T. This is inviting enemy air action. The troops in their irritation blamed the air force for the handling they received from the German Air Force. In the circumstances, however, it was their own commanders at whom they should have levelled their ignorant criticism. It was self evident that we could not effectively cover such a withdrawal by day, which gave an ideal opportunity to the German air force. Every endeavour should have been made, therefore, to withdraw exclusively by night. It was not, and in consequence the morale of our troops was exposed to unnecessary shock, our manoeuvres were broadcast to the enemy, and the best possible conditions were produced for the development of the fullest effect of the German air force.

### IV. CLOSE SUPPORT FOR AN ARMY IN DEFENCE.

1. The first essential for an army to operate on the ground in modern warfare is to be able to avoid being paralysed by enemy air action. Fire discipline, camouflage and properly dug in positions can do much towards this, but these must be regarded as complementary to action in the air. The lowest common denominator for the provision of close support to an army on the defense, if that army is to have any prospect of successful resistance, is an air organisation capable of countering enemy air action at any point at which he chooses to bring it to bear, with sufficient effect to prevent paralysis or dislocation of our army's ground defences, engaged simultaneously in resisting an enemy ground offensive.

2. Protection of air bases will in all likelihood be coincident with the protection of the army L. of C. and possibly their base area and ports. But the first fundamental which I have already emphasized must not be lost sight of - the air must first and foremost secure its own bases. In Greece, air forces were so inadequate that they did not even permit us to do this.

3. The advantages accruing to the air force holding air superiority mount as the square of the negative value of the disadvantage weighing like a millstone round the neck of the inferior force. The inferior force is thrown on the defensive, the fighters used by the already superior force for covering its bases can afford to uncover these bases and can be used in still further rubbing in the inferiority of the foe.

The bombers of the superior force supporting the army can be brought up to the front, facilitating communication and quick support, while those of the inferior air force must be withdrawn and are probably confined to night operations. Finally, the inferior force is either driven so far back as to be ineffective or is destroyed on its aerodromes.

(continued)

## V. DAY BOMBING.

1. It is simply a waste of air crews and aircraft to try to conduct an uncovered air bombing campaign by day in restricted country and cloudless skies against a big and well organised air force such as the German. Bombers do not win battles against modern fighters, heavily armed and flown by determined pilots. Except in most limited circumstances, all bombers must operate under cover of night, cloud or fighter protection. The Western Desert is perhaps an exception. By approaching targets from the sea, it is possible to attack the enemy by surprise with comparative ease. In addition, the distances make it impossible for him to maintain a standing patrol over the whole area as, on the other hand, he very easily could do in a restricted area like Albania.

2. If it is accepted that bombers cannot operate except under cover, then day bombing in cloudless skies with fighter protection is limited by the range of the fighters. In escorting bombers on these missions, we find that we increase the number of men and amount of material required to drop each bomb. It may be argued that in certain conditions this is not altogether uneconomical, since the bombers provide a bait for the enemy fighters whom, if we hold air superiority, we are glad to attract into the air so that they may be destroyed by our fighters. Escorts are only effective if they can wield the necessary degree of air superiority to allow the bombers to do their job. The Germans have tried various ways to solve the problem of getting their bombs to targets in England by day - the use of heavy fighter escorts and later by fitting single bombs to fighter aircraft - but they failed to establish the degree of air superiority in the face of British defences such as was necessary to make it profitable for them to bomb. The single bomb fighter/bomber aircraft was used also in Crete in conjunction with ground strafing, but the bomb loads are reduced to such small proportions that this technique is only suitable against targets in approximately the same category as those which might well be ground strafed. Eventually, if this ruse is ineffective, and if fighter escorts cannot be made effective, all bombing must be carried out solely under cloud cover or by night. Is our policy right in carrying on building the day bombers in such quantities? Should not our main effort be directed towards the night bomber?

## VI. CONCEPTION OF DEFENCE IN MODERN WAR.

1. It seems that a most important revolution in the conduct of war is taking place. With the introduction of parachute troops, air borne landings and glider operations, something akin to a new dimension has entered the sphere of military operations. The notion of area or zone defence is frequently referred to but it has little meaning to most. It is intimately bound up with the conception and state of air superiority and the circumstances of any particular zone fluctuate with it. For example, the defence of the zone within enemy short range fighter influence must receive greater attention than the zone beyond their reach, since if the enemy finds himself able temporarily to establish air superiority with his fighters for a given period, he is able to give support to a parachute landing and prevent our interference both from the air and on the ground. The ease with which this support can be given increases the size of the area as to the enemy's advanced landing grounds. The

defence of the zone on the ground must be greatest when and where our air superiority is least, thus the drain on the front line troops is greatest at the worst possible time. Beyond the range of the enemy fighters, the only danger is a landing by day by unescorted bombers, which could be dealt with by our air force except in extreme circumstances of air inferiority, or a parachute landing from night bombers which would be totally unsupported throughout the day by any but long range fighters, which must always remain inferior in performance to the short range fighter. With these things in mind, we can work out what contingencies would prompt the enemy to employ any of the above tactics and provide accordingly. Unless proper provision is made by the army, it is failing in the first operation of war - to secure its bases. Important posts, or dumps, or factories, or stations might provide the types of objective upon which the enemy would drop parachutists by night, being prepared to lose them after they have done their sabotage work. If the enemy wishes to cut off certain troops or strategic points near the front line to influence the military situation at the point of contact of the two armies, he might try to enforce air superiority for a short period of a few hours, just enough to drop parachutists and to allow them to dig in and form an infiltration pocket to create the necessary diversion and thereby allow his army to carry out a successful following up attack. To counter these threats, depending directly upon the state of the air protection which we can enforce, the army must place suitable garrisons on strategic objectives, adjusting their strength to the air and topographical situation, laying out a field of defences so that when the enemy lands he will find himself in the embarrassing position where he is enveloped by a spider's web of strong points. It is a scheme based on infiltration methods and area defences linked up with R/T, R/T, telephone, Aldis lamp, Veecey pistol signal or any other method appropriate to the circumstances. It discards absolutely the line of battle of the Maginot type of war theory. The establishment of such a system must be carefully balanced to avoid a dangerous division of forces and must be controlled by a large number of area operations rooms under area commanders controlling strong mobile forces at strategic points standing by to move to the danger point or points. Sub posts and operations room must be able to take over, the whole being controlled by a higher central operations room.

2. I suggest that a clear conception of some such idea is vital. It implies that, amongst other things, the army commander must reject the staff college teaching that he must be as far forward as possible in order to influence the battle. The battle is not confined to the front line which is merely the first point of contact of the opposing armies. If he is to influence the battle, at the time when his influence is most needed, that is when the armies become interlocked, each establishing pockets far into the other territory, he must be behind the chief danger area, where the enemy can support their air landings and he must be at the one or area defence centre and its operations room, at the closest contact with the Air commander, who can advise him constantly of the continually fluctuating state of the air situation. If the Air and Military commanders are separated in a modern campaign, immediate lack of co-ordination is inevitable and the zone defence controller will be forced to guess, depend on unreliable information and generally grope in the muck and dark of rumour and the organisation of modern defences depends on good communications and precise co-ordination more than military organisation ever yet conceived through