

for Syria to repatriate to France a part of Weygand's surrendered army.

The Dodecanese Islands lay only twenty minutes' flight away, but it was early yet for Italian raiders. We edged down onto Crete's grey-green coast, slid past Mount Ida, and on over the broken highlands of the island. The General was as delighted as the rest of us to see mountains again after spending the summer in flat desert. Riding by an island in a sea of matchless blue was still another group of British cruisers and destroyers.

Suda Bay, as we splashed down among the shipping, might have been Plymouth. Army, Navy and R.A.F. colours floated among the Greek inscriptions on the wharfside buildings. A stream of Army lorries was carrying supplies away to secret British hide-outs among the olive trees. Here and there a bomb had landed among the cottages, but the fishermen squatted as usual on the pavement mending nets.

This was General Wavell's first visit to Crete and the first time since the collapse of France that a British general had stepped onto new allied territory. The visit was kept so 'hush-hush' that even the crew of the 'plane hadn't known previously that he was aboard, and here at Suda just a handful of Greek and British staff officers met the General.

By nightfall the Commander-in-Chief had lunched at Brigade Headquarters, toured gun emplacements and camps, and got reports from all the senior officers—doctors, sappers, gunners, brigade majors—who had carried out this first landing without loss of man or bullet.

Naturally Crete, twenty miles wide and a hundred and fifty miles long, hasn't been entirely occupied, and the barren mountain-tops in eastern Crete are largely uninhabited. But British forces are disposed in a way that would make an Italian

landing a dangerous gamble. All the villages are up in arms. Without an effective Navy in this zone the Italians are resorting to spasmodic air attacks.

I saw strange sights as I toured alone round Canea and the neighbouring townships. Tanks decked with flowers by almost frantically loyal Cretans, hundreds of famished cats, whose owners have been evacuated to caves in the hills, wailing over the bombed ruins of houses, a restaurant decorated with old photographs of Lloyd George and Lord Byron and British warships anchored in Suda Bay in the last war. Tommies and Greek conscripts who were not born when those photographs were taken were singing Greek and English songs together in a waterfront cellar to the accompaniment of a mandolin played by a mountaineer in his native embroidered jacket and flapping black trousers.

A British staff officer went shopping for the Mess in the vegetable market with a string bag over his arm. British tanks rumbled into the town square and the Orthodox Bishop of Crete in his vestments blessed them passionately and held up a crucifix for the crews to kiss as they sat rigidly at their posts.

I climbed the minaret of a now roofless mosque in the centre of the school and residential area where the Italians have been skilfully dropping 500-lb. bombs. As I watched, the raiders came over again but were driven too high by the Navy's guns to aim properly. Church bells gave the warning, and as the bombs crumpled into the mountainside the Cretans swarmed pellmell into shops and cellars, snapping down steel shutters behind them.

Twice since then in the night the old Greek watchman has come running up the wooden stairs to my room shouting: "here they come again"—like scores of others here he has lived in America and speaks English. Some of the bombs weren't far from the General. He slept through it.

BRITISH BREN CARRIERS AND LIGHT TANKS RECEIVE EPISCOPAL BLESSING

The four official W.O. photographs below show the Bishop of Canea blessing the columns.

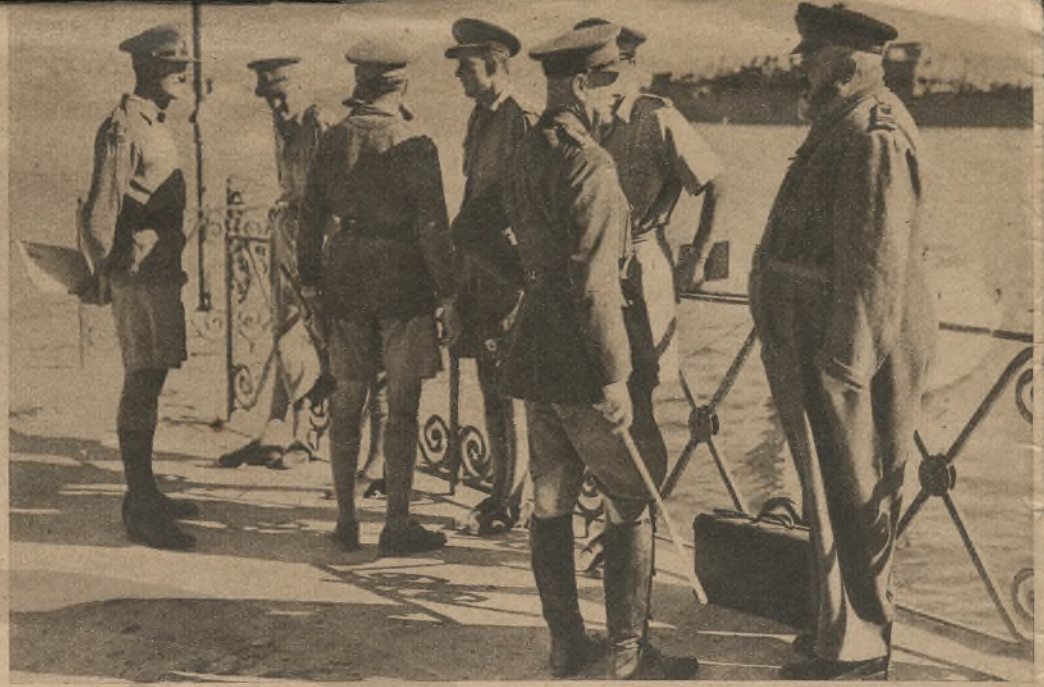


Below:— As the mechanised columns pass through the towns of Crete they are greeted by cheering crowds.





The G.O.C.-in-C. General Sir Archibald Wavell lands on Greek soil to inspect the defences and troops.



General Wavell has a word with a naval officer on landing...



...and has a look at the vegetables for the troops meals...



...before they are sent to the cookhouse.



Work on the defences has already started and the G.O.C.-in-C. inspects the results.



The Force Commander in his H.Q. in the middle of an olive grove.
Official War Office Photographs



A light machine gun mounted on the coast. Ships of the Royal Navy can be seen off shore.

Though the village squares are packed with refugees this morning, and carts, piled high with furniture, are moving into the interior, it is going to take many more raids really to unsettle Crete. Life is going on just as easily—the town bus waited half-an-hour in Canea for me to finish lunch, and the restaurant proprietor didn't want to charge me for the jug of heady red wine he drew from an eight-foot cask. Fish, fruit, vegetables, cheese, brown bread and eggs abound.

In the Dodecanese, from which I have first-hand news this morning, the Italian soldiers are getting cooked meals only twice a week. The daily bread ration is a chunk about the size of your fist.

There have been at least two mutinous incidents recently. A convent at Calimnos was broken into by Italian soldiers according to several reports, and Fascist pilots said to number about twenty are under detention at Rhodes for refusal to obey orders. Greek fishermen in the Dodecanese have been ordered to disarm their boats and stow the sails, but some seventy have nevertheless reached Crete and more have arrived at the Greek mainland. It seems fairly sure now that the natives in all fourteen Dodecanese islands are in open hostility to the Italians. In Crete a wealthy Greek has offered fifty thousand pounds for raising an anti-Fascist army in the Dodecanese.

Greek enthusiasm everywhere is unbounded. Many came hurrying to me with the news of the Taranto bombing. British officers who have just toured eastern Crete were carried shoulder-high to be blessed by the priests, and their car filled with chrysanthemums. The Cretans speak of the tradition of islanders—you in England, the Maltese and themselves.

High over Crete I am writing this message on the homeward journey. The Commander-in-Chief sits opposite, writing a report too—more precise than this, I imagine, but as enthusiastic, I have little doubt. He has told me how satisfied he is. Before this message gets to London the General will have consulted Admiral Cunningham aboard his Flagship and new plans will go forward for binding Crete more firmly yet into our chain of Middle East fortresses.