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26.10.42.

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GREECE ; MILITARY

SALONIKA.

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Movement of German Troops & Equipment.

1. During the period middle August to middle October there was an average of 15,000 - 20,000 German troops always in SALONIKA. As soon as one contingent left, it was replaced by another. The passage of troops from North to South was continuous. Encampments were being prepared day and night for fresh units in all the suburbs of the city.
2. No German parachutists were observed in SALONIKA.
3. No German tanks were seen to form part of any unit stationed in SALONIKA. There is a large concentration of motor transport in PLATEIA ARISTOTELOUS.
4. During recent weeks there was an incessant passage of gun-carriers, Red Cross ambulances and motor vehicles loaded with A/A and other light guns through the streets of SALONIKA.
5. Throughout one week during the second half of September 2000 - 3000 German troops per day passed through the village of KORDELIO (5 kms N.W. of SALONIKA). The troops arrived by train, spent one night at a military station ("stratitotiki stassis") close to and S.E. of KORDELIO and then moved southwards by rail, a small portion moving eastwards, also by rail, towards THRACE.
6. Equipment of troops was entirely new, intended for desert warfare and included rifles, tommy-guns, 55 m/m guns, motor cycles and light tanks as well as M.T.

Following marking observed on M.T:-

7. The troops included:-
 - a) Veterans from campaigns on Eastern Front (Leningrad, Moscow and Sebastopol sectors).
 - b) Newly trained troops, aged between 17 and 20.
 - c) Polish conscripts from Western Poland.

NOTE: Informant, when asked how he accounted for presence of Poles among German troops, stated that he had obtained his information from one of the Poles passing through KORDELIO. The latter had admitted to him that when requested to join the German Army as a "volunteer", he had refused outright. The German authorities then arrested his parents and detained them for three days in a Gestapo prison. On the third day, the young Pole was allowed to visit his parents. Seeing what appalling physical tortures they had undergone, and on being informed that they would not be released until he accepted to "volunteer" in the German Army, he felt compelled to adopt the latter course. He stated to informant that he and all Poles, recruited in similar circumstances, intended to desert to the British as soon as they came into action on the Egyptian Front. He declared the Polish "volunteers" to be disposed as follows: 50 in each German Company.

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8. All the above troops, the newly trained as well as the older ones from the Eastern Front, come from HAMBURG, the RUHR and the Rhineland areas. Those who had been fighting in the Russian campaigns were granted three weeks leave in Germany before proceeding to Greece.

Fuel Stores.

9. All petrol tanks, situated at the western end of the harbour, destroyed by the Imperial Forces when evacuating SALONIKA in April, 1941 have been repaired. The tanks are always full of petrol.

10. Fuel in drums is stored in the open around a water mill at NEA KOKLOUTSAS, suburb approx. 2½ kms N.W. of SALONIKA. Six houses with red roofs are situated in a line running south to north from the water mill. It is believed that Germans are billeted in these houses. Drums are camouflaged with branches of trees. No civilians are allowed to approach area of water mill, which is guarded (so far as a civilian can observe) by 2 German sentries, armed with rifles. No A/A gun can be seen.

Damaged Motor Transport.

11. Damaged German motor transport is conveyed from Southern Greece and Bulgaria to a station at a point 500 metres S. of KORDELIO on the main SALONIKA - ATHENS road. Numerous Russian rubber tyres were observed among the damaged motor vehicles. A German soldier told informant that damaged motor transport is dispatched from this point to Germany for repairs.

Repair of Bridges.

12. Road bridges spanning (a) the River AXIOS at GEPHRA, approx. 25 kms. W.N.W. of SALONIKA, and (b) the canal linking the River ALIAKMON with Lake GIANNITSON at a point 66 kms. W. of SALONIKA, which were destroyed by the retreating Allied Forces in April 1941, and temporarily replaced by wooden bridges, are now being repaired.

13. Road bridge spanning the River ALIAKMON between GIDA and EKATERINI at point just S. of GIDA was replaced by pontoons. The Germans are now working on repairs to the original stone bridge.

Fortifications & Road-making.

14. All passes leading through the Mt. OLYMPUS range from the north into the Plain of THESSALY have been mined.

15. Road-making and fortification-building in the Mt. OLYMPUS area have been particularly intense in the neighbourhood of EKATERINI. Jews from SALONIKA have been conscripted to work under Greek surveillance on the roads in this area.

Morale.

16. From his observation of and contacts with the troops passing through KORDELIO, informant came to the conclusion that the morale of the newly trained troops was excellent, their enthusiasm unbounded and their loyalty to HITLER fanatical. The tone of the older men from the Eastern Front was far more subdued. Although some of them were as young as 23 years old, they appeared to be thoroughly tired of the war; there was, moreover, a certain lack of conviction in their professed belief in victory; nor did they show any enthusiasm for HITLER and the Nazi Party. The discipline of all troops was perfect.

17. Troops had instructions to behave well to the local Greek inhabitants. Nevertheless their behaviour was one of brutal callousness. As soon as they arrived in the village, soldiers and junior officers would enter the inhabitants houses and carry off anything they required or fancied. The price they paid for any objects which they removed were about ¼ of their existing purchasing power.

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18. Informant states that there are a number of Communists among the German troops whom he encountered at KORDELIO. This was revealed to him by one soldier with whom he became acquainted, and who, after a lengthy and circuitous admission that he possessed Communist sympathies, bade good-bye to informant with the cry "Heil Stalin!"

19. Informant was told by German soldiers that civilian casualties caused by R.A.F. raids over Germany had been especially high in BREMEN, HAMBURG and DUSSELDORF. These cities were described by one soldier (whose wife had been killed in a raid on DUSSELDORF) as "devasted". Informant observed that news of large-scale air-raids on German cities had a very bad effect on the morale of the troops stationed at and passing through KORDELIO.

Patriotic Organisation.

20. A patriotic organisation, known as the "Organisation of Young Macedonian Greeks" ("Organossis tis Ellinikis Makedonikis Neolais") has been formed, with H.Q. established in SALONIKA. The system has been adopted whereby the Chief alone knows all the members, each member knowing 4 others and the sub-chief to whom he is responsible. Agents travel across the Macedonian countryside recruiting newmembers and distributing pamphlets containing, among other items, news broadcast by the B.B.C. Greeks along can become members. The organisation aims at purely national and non-political objectives. Party politics are taboo. The organisation possesses a number of rifles and a small number of machine-guns. Members told informant that they were waiting for a second front to be established in the Balkans before passing to overt action. Their aim then will be to harrass the retreating Axis forces, to carry out sabotage and demolition work.

Note 1:- From informant's personal observation and contacts with German troops while at KORDELIO village and in SALONIKA itself during period July 30th - October 19th, 1942.

Note 2:- Informant is of Czech origin, speaks German and Greek fluently; twice escaped from German prison camps in GREECE.

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