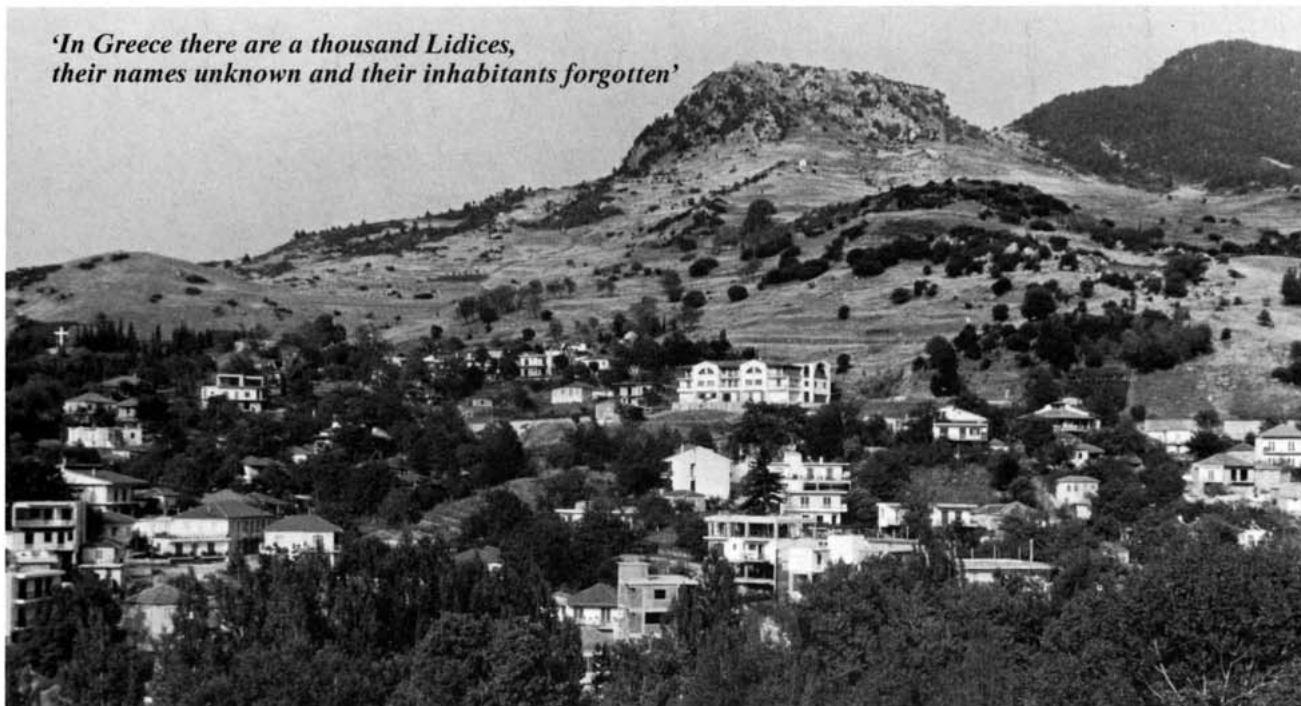


*'In Greece there are a thousand Lidices,
their names unknown and their inhabitants forgotten'*



THE MASSACRE AT KALAVRYTA

PROLOGUE

On December 13, 1993, following a memorial service in the cathedral, a long procession left the centre of Kalavryta, a small town high in the northern Peloponnese. Led by the mayor, Takis Nikolaou, and Ambrossios, Metropolitan Archbishop of Kalavryta and Aigialia, the column moved at solemn pace out of the town, up the long steps of an oleander-lined path, past the cemetery, to the foot of a hill crowned by a giant cross. At about 12.30 p.m. it halted on a stone-paved square flanked by tall, grey, concrete slabs. After a brief blessing, the names carved on the slabs were read out to the assembled crowd, and as the last of these rang out a runner entered the square with a flaming torch, which had been carried in relay from ancient Olympia, some 40 miles to the south-west, and lit with it an eternal flame set beside the square. Then, with simple ceremony, Greek officials, visiting dignitaries and townspeople laid wreath upon wreath below the slabs, and the crowd stood bareheaded in the cold sunshine to observe a minute of silence.

The occasion was the 50th anniversary of 'The Sacrifice' — the shooting by German troops of the male population of Kalavryta and the firing of the town. The day's ceremonies in Kalavryta (literally 'good springs') were the culmination of a series of commemorative occasions there and across Greece in remembrance of the largest, in

terms of both loss of life and destruction, of some 1,700 similar incidents which occurred during the occupation. The site of the impressive memorial bearing the names of some 1,300 victims from Kalavryta and nearby villages of German wrath, is the amphitheatre overlooking the town where, on the chill winter's afternoon half a century ago, machine guns opened up on the men and boys who had been herded there earlier in the day.

THE KALAVRYTA MASSACRE

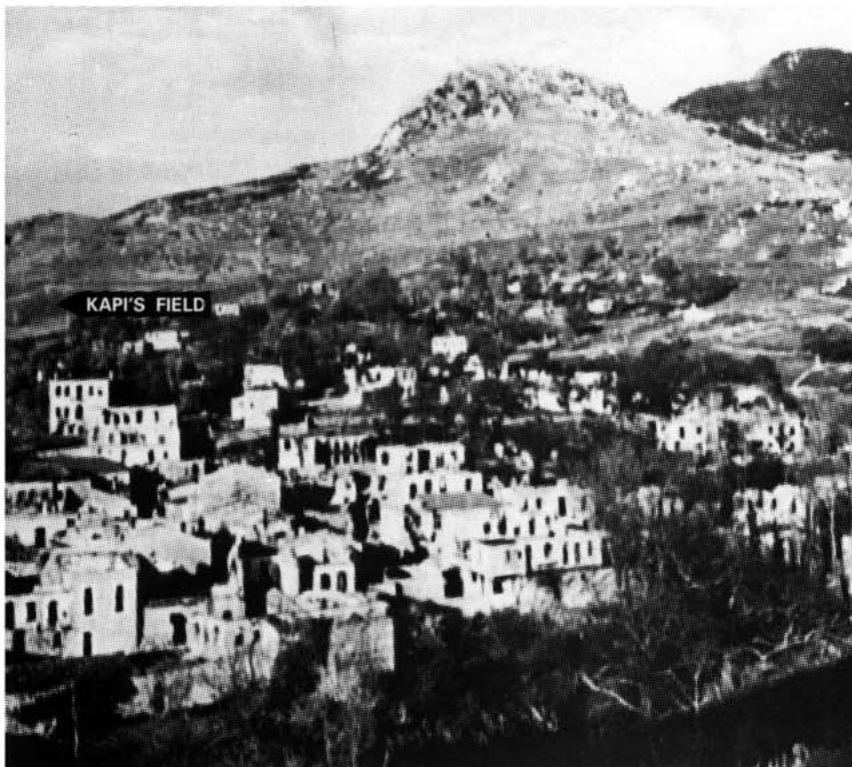
The components of the Kalavryta incident are fairly clear. Early in 1942, resistance to the occupation of Greece by German and Italian forces began to organise. Several groups with royalist, nationalist and left-wing political leanings emerged, but dominating this movement was EAM (Ethniko Ape-

By John Cleave

leftherotiko Metepo), the National Liberation Front directed by the Greek Communist Party, KKE. The military wing of EAM was the people's liberation army, ELAS (Elinikos Laikos Apeleftherotikos Stratos). Initially, activities were small-scale, uncoordinated, and largely ineffective. However, during 1943, sabotage and attacks on the various elements of the occupying forces were stepped up in a loosely-concerted effort that covered large areas of Greece. In July, reflecting growing concern at the attacks, Hitler's Directive No. 48 ordered the planning of a series of large-scale operations (Grossunternehmen) against the guerrillas and the first of these were launched in October.

Kalavryta in the northern Peloponnese — the large peninsula in southern Greece — has become the symbol of all the 1,700 villages which suffered destruction and loss of life in reprisals carried out by German forces in Greece during the Second World War. The bitter, no-holds-barred war between the Greek resistance and the occupation forces, in a country whose topography was ideal for guerrilla warfare, came to a head in December 1943 with the razing of the village and the deaths of the entire male population. Right: Kalavryta as it appeared before the war and top the comparison taken by John Cleave today.





Photographed from the same spot; the gutted remains of the village in the winter of 1943-44. The massacre took place in Kapi's field which is now marked by a giant white cross seen in the present-day view opposite. The large building which now stands on the hillside in the centre of that picture is an old people's home constructed after the war with German funds given as a gesture of atonement.

The first partisan attacks in the Peloponnese were launched by ELAS on May 15, 1943. In August and again in September, German army units had visited Kalavryta, the largest town in the area of guerrilla operations in the northern Peloponnese, and warned the populace against providing aid to the partisans. They gave force to their argument by shooting several men in nearby villages, and hanging, before the town's main hotel, Hotel Chelmos, an 18-year-old found with a weapon. Following these warnings, the town elders pleaded with the partisans not to involve the town, but the ELAS leadership decided, on the contrary, to step up their attacks. They set up their headquarters in Vysoka, only three kilometres from Kalavryta, and sabotaged the roads to Patras, Mazeika and Diakopto.

With the surrender of the Italian Army on September 8/9, 1943, thousands of its weapons fell into partisan hands giving them new opportunity to recruit and operate in strength. A report by the 'Ic', the staff intelligence officer at HQ of LXVIII. Armeekorps, dated November 27, 1943, is revealing. It stated that, in the Peloponnese where German troop strength was low, EAM and ELAS had 'come to assume the power of the state in all ways . . . The bands control the road traffic and the collection and distribution of the olive harvest . . . They hold judicial sessions at which not only political opponents but also the usual delinquents are sentenced.' The report continued that, although the northern Peloponnese had been virtually free of 'bandits' until October 1943, thereafter there were five to six thousand operating in the impassable mountain country in the hinterland of Patras and Aigion. This included two to three thousand in the Kalavryta area where they were under the command of a former lieutenant-colonel in the Greek Army, Dimitri Michos.

On October 19, a particularly large scale ambush of a German company, 5. Kompanie of Jäger-Regiment 749 based on Aigion,

took place at a rail junction at Antritsa near Kerpini, some four kilometres north of Kalavryta. Four Germans, including the company commander, died and most of the rest of the force comprising 78 soldiers, three of whom were wounded, was captured. The Germans offered to exchange the prisoners for Greeks held in custody, but rejected the partisans' insistence on 50 Greeks being



A group of partisans in the Kalavryta area in July 1942. Partisan operations increased when large numbers of weapons fell into their hands following the surrender of the Italian Army in September 1943. By the year's end, Communist-directed ELAS partisans in the Kalavryta area were estimated by the Germans to number 2-3,000.

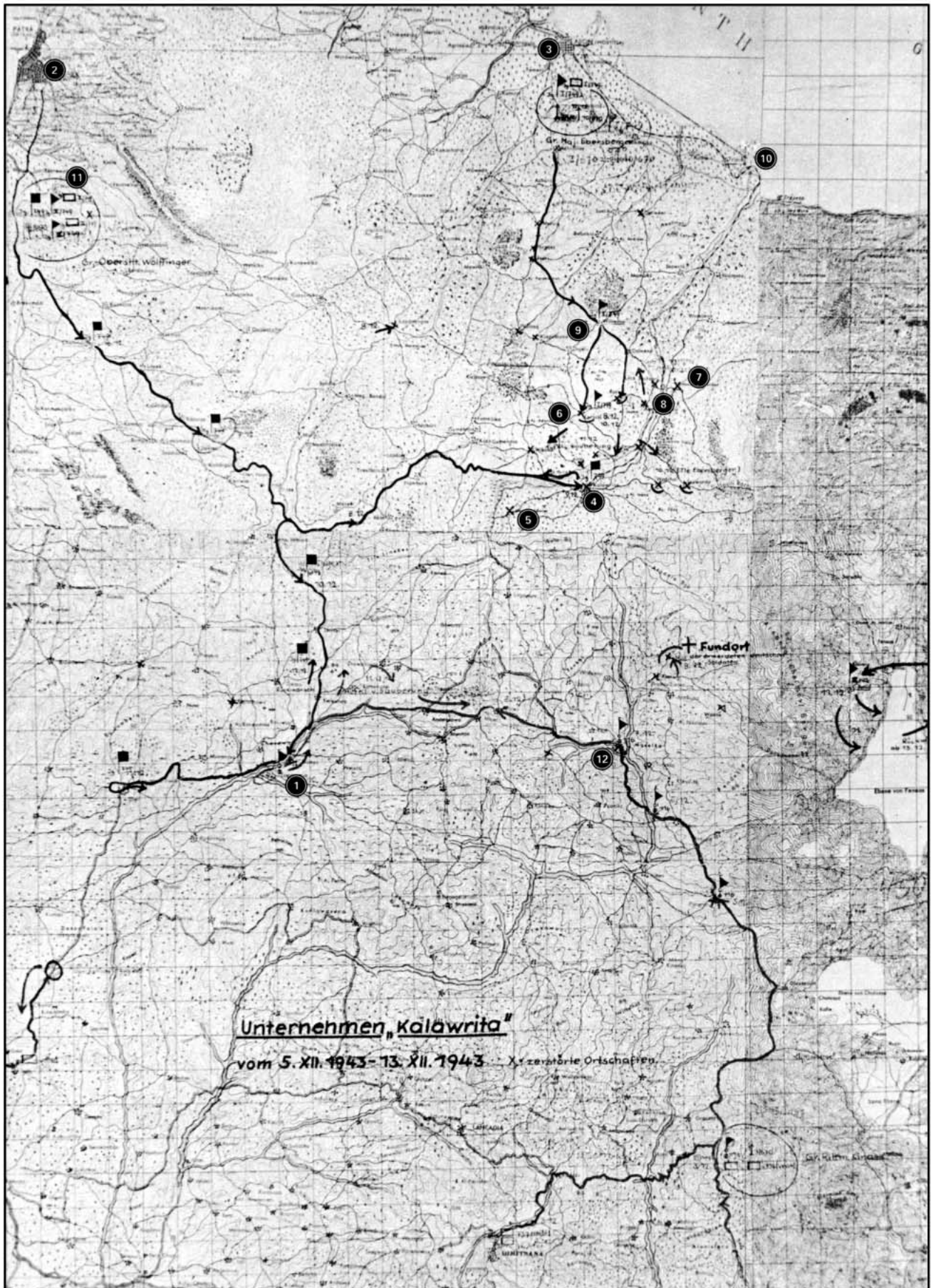
released for one German — the ratio which the Germans themselves followed in their reprisal policy.

On November 28, following an unsuccessful search for the prisoners, an instruction was issued for the LXVIII. Armeekorps to mount a retaliatory action coded *Unternehmen 'Kalavryta'* (Operation 'Kalavryta'). Less than a week later, units of 117. Jäger-Division were mobilised. The corps commander was General der Flieger Helmuth Felmy, but he was on leave at the time and the operation was ordered and launched by the commander of the division, General Karl von Le Suire, a staunch Nazi with a reputation for being anti-Greek.

Three major Kampfgruppen, each named after its commanding officer, converged on Kalavryta. Kampfgruppe [Oberstleutnant] Wölffinger started from Patras to the north-west of Kalavryta and after a relatively uneventful march was the first to enter the town. Kampfgruppe [Major] Ebersberger started from Aigion to the north. His troops carried out a series of reprisals and burned several villages en route to Kalavryta. Kampfgruppe [Rittmeister] Gnass operated from Tripoli in the south. Its troops were the first to mobilise but appear not to have reached Kalavryta.

The progress of the two-week exercise is tersely sketched in the daily reports of LXVIII. Armeekorps extracted below, and graphically shown on the operations map of the corps reproduced overleaf. (The dates are those of the report, not the events, which always occurred on the previous day.) The reports originated with the 'Ia', the operations officer at corps HQ in Salonika, and were signed by the '01', the first adjutant officer, Lieutenant Frey. A daily intelligence summary was also produced by the Ic. As this largely repeated the information of the operations report, only extracts which provide additional material have been added here, in square parentheses.

The two-company-strong Kampfgruppe Kockert, which opened operations, appears to have been an advance unit of Kampfgruppe Gnass. The III. Bataillon, 22. Jäger-Regiment, based on Corinth, was briefly introduced to block partisan movements to



German operations map for Operation 'Kalavryta', December 5-13, 1943. Kampfgruppe Gnass started from near Tripoli [1] in the south, Kampfgruppe Wölffinger from Patras [2], north-west of Kalavryta, and Kampfgruppe Ebersberger from Aigion [3],

due north. Villages destroyed are marked X. 'Fundort+' marks where the bodies of the German prisoners were recovered. [4] Kalavryta. [5] Agia Lavra. [6] Kerpín. [7] Mega Spíleon. [8] Rogi. [9] Vilínvina. [10] Diakopto. [11] Chalandritsa. [12] Mazeika.

the east. Festungs-Infanterie-Regiment [FIR] 965, based on Pirgos, was also active at this time but apparently was not considered part of Operation 'Kalavryta'.

3.12.43. Intentions for 3.12: Aufklärungs-Abteilung 116 [AA 116, from Tripolis] to begin Operation Kalavryta.

4.12.43. Operation Kalavryta: AA 116 reached Vytina; 2 reinforced Jäger-Kpn. (KG Kockert) reached Dimitsana without enemy contact.

Intentions for 4.12: Increased reconnaissance of Langadia by AA 116 and continued march towards Vytina by KG Kockert.

5.12.43. Intentions for 5.12: 117. Jäger-Division [from Aigion] to begin Operation Kalavryta. Execution of 50 hostages at ambush site at Antritsa rail junction.

6.12.43. KG Gnass' objective of Pantraki (10 km N of Vytina) reached without enemy contact. 50 hostages hanged at Antritsa station as reprisal measures.

7.12.43. (a) KG Wöllfinger (II. and III./JR 749) [2nd and 3rd Battalions, 749th Light Infantry Regiment] reached Chalandritsa (10 km SE of Patras). Enemy fled to SE after brief exchange of fire. (b) KG Gnass (AA 116 with 2. Kompanie, III./JR 737 and 1 battery of Artillerie-Regiment 670) arrived in the area 20 km S of Kalavryta. (c) In the operation, 1 reinforced company exchanged fire with 30 guerrillas near Hagionorion (7 km SSE of Chileomodeon). So far, weapons and ammunition captured.

8.12.43. KG Wöllfinger reached the area 20 km SE of Patras, KG Ebersberger reached Vilivina (15 km S of Aigion), and KG Gnass reached Mazeika. No further enemy resistance.

9.12.43. Cordon created 10 km around Kalavryta. The 78 men of 5. Kompanie/JR 749 that were overcome on 19.10 in Kalavryta, except for some who escaped, were murdered on 7.12 in the mountains east of Kalavryta.

Intentions for 9.12: Position III./JR 22 in the area 25 km SE of Kalavryta to prevent the bands escaping east.

[Ic: In reprisal for shot German soldiers, villages to be burned down and male inhabitants shot].

10.12.43. KG Wöllfinger reached Kalavryta without enemy contact. KG Gnass advancing to the west with battle-strength units in Tripotamia (8 km E of Prinofyton). One truck-borne reinforced company of Festungs-Infanterie-Regiment [FIR] 965 arrived at roadblock outside Lalas (22 km SW of Tripotamia). III./JR 22 reached Kastanea (30 km SE of Kalavryta).

[Ic: Two survivors confirm murder of 78 German soldiers was by shooting. Search for dead, without result].

11.12.43. (a) KG Wöllfinger continued towards Tripotamia without enemy contact. KG Major Ebersberger continued reprisal measures in Roji [Rogi] and Kerpini (4 km N of Kalavryta). Details lacking. (b) 1 platoon-strength scout troop of the reinforced company of FIR 965 in action 10 km S of Livri. Own losses: 10 dead, 11 wounded.

12.12.43. (a) KG Wöllfinger reached Prinofyton [Mazi] without enemy contact. (b) KGs Ebersberger and Gnass mopping up and reconnaissance in Kalavryta-Tripotamia area. No enemy contact. (c) Reprisal measures to date: 9 villages in the area NE of Kalavryta destroyed and 142 men shot. (d) Reinforced company, FIR 965 in the area 14 km S of Prinofyton. No enemy contact. (e) III./JR 22 reached Fonia (20 km SE of Kalavryta) without enemy contact.

13.12.43. Operation Kalavryta terminated except for carrying out of reprisals. KG Wöllfinger on the return march to head-

Geheim! 684

Geheime Kommandosache!

Fernschreibstelle

Fernschreibens Laufende Nr. 655/541/43

Abgeschicktes Aufgenommen

Datum: 194

um: 1830 Uhr

von: HMP/IR/KN/IV/IS HLDIV

durch: Vuch Vuch Ruch

Beitrdert: 14.12.1943

um: 1830 Uhr

an: HMP/IR/KN/IV/IS HLDIV

Roll: Vuch Vuch Ruch

Vermerk:

Fernschreiben

Bestimmung von: LXVIII. A.K. Ia

Bestimmung:

14.12.43	0855	An	1.) O.Kdo.H.Gr. E Ia 541
Abgangzeit	Abgangzeit	mchr.:	2.) 117. Jg. Div. 542
			3.) 11. Lw. Felddiv. 543

KR (nur für H.Gr.)

Vormärkte für Beförderung (vom Aufgeber auszufüllen)

Bestimmungsort

Tagesmeldung.

1.) Palapennos:

a) Unternehmen "Kalawrita": Im Zuge der Sühnemaßnahmen 3 Ortschaften niedergebrannt, Kalawrita völlig zerstört, 511 männliche Einwohner erschossen. 70 Leichen der ermordeten deutschen Soldaten geborgen. Kampfgruppen auf dem Rückmarsch in ihre Standorte unter Durchführung von Sühnemaßnahmen.

b) Während des Einsatzes der verst.Kp.Fest.Inf.Rgt.965 in Pirgos 24 Verbrecher durch Banditen aus dem Gefängnis befreit.

2.) Bewegungsmeldung.

a) 11./999 nach Sprengung Flugplatz Messene nach Kalamata verlegt.

b) 2 Kpn. XII./Fest.Inf.Btl.999 in Korinth eingetroffen.

LXVIII. A.K. Ia Nr. 7518/43 geh.

11103 EINS RE HKN/IV/IS

Nicht zu übermitteln

Unterschrift des Aufgebers

Fernsprech-Anschluß des Aufgebers

'Kalavryta completely destroyed.' The terse daily report from LXVIII. Armeekorps issued early the following morning announcing the destruction of Kalavryta and the shooting of 511 (sic) men.

quarters. In a search at the site of the shooting of units of 5. Kompanie/JR 749, several corpses recovered.

14.12.43. Operation Kalavryta: In the course of reprisals 3 villages burned down, Kalavryta completely destroyed, 511 male inhabitants shot. 70 corpses of murdered Germans recovered. KGs carrying out reprisals on the return march to their stations.

15.12.43. In continuation of reprisals in the area of Kalavryta, 1 village and 2 monasteries [Mega Spileon and Agia Lavra] destroyed. Movement report: After completion of Operation Kalavryta, AA 116 arrived in Tripolis and reinforced company of FIR 965 in Pirgos. Some units still returning to their quarters.

16.12.43. Operation Kalavryta: In the course of reprisals, Mazeika [now named Klitoria] (11 km SE of Kalavryta) burned down. Operation completed. (Ic: 18 houses destroyed in Dara [Daras] (12 km SE of Mazeika) and 35 Communists arrested).

The LXVIII. Armeekorps reported at the end of December that during that month its troops had burned 28 villages and shot 918 Greeks, 839 of which, including the entire male population of Kalavryta (696), were shot as hostages. These figures clearly understate the reality, and the terse military reporting omits much, not least the killing on December 8 of 15 men including eight monks from the monastery at Mega Spileon. Their bodies were then tossed over the cliff above the historic site.

It is to the more graphic descriptions of local writers that we must turn for details of the events in Kalavryta. The units of Kampfgruppe Wöllfinger entered the town, without resistance, on December 9. Before reaching Kalavryta, the Germans had already learned that the captured soldiers of 5. Kompanie of Jäger-Regiment 749 had been killed by the partisans as they fled the German sweeps, and the decision to destroy Kalavryta and shoot the men had already been made. But the Germans revealed nothing of these plans. They imposed a 4 p.m.-to-dawn curfew,



December 1943. Widows attending graves at the site of the massacre. Lacking the means or strength to move the bodies, the women initially buried their men where they fell, and moved the remains to the cemetery later. Without food and shelter, the harsh winter left the women and surviving children in desperate straits.

forbade all movement outside the town, and demanded the surrender of any weapons. They then set about identifying the houses of partisans, which they burned down along with the Hotel Chelmos.

They also questioned the townsmen about the missing men. The townsmen knew of the prisoners, but of the whereabouts and fate of only three. Immediately after the clash near Kerpini, the partisans had brought the 78 captives into the town where they were held overnight in the school. Next morning, they had marched the prisoners off to the south, leaving behind the three wounded, who had then been treated at the Hotel Paradeisos which was being used as a hospital. A few days later, however, a small group of partisans had arrived, demanded the wounded men, taken them some way out of town, knifed them, and thrown the bodies down a well. From there they were later recovered by the townsmen, and buried close to town.

Over the period December 10–12, the Germans were largely engaged in sweeps through villages surrounding Kalavryta, and in searching for the bodies of the missing soldiers. On the day after they entered the town, the Germans were shown the graves of the three that had been wounded and the bodies were exhumed. In the town there was uneasy quiet. Five men accused of breaking curfew were shot, and there was some looting by soldiers, but the Germans took no general action against the town, and the citizens gradually relaxed, even discounting hints from sympathetic Germans that reprisals were to take place.

But at dawn on Monday, December 13, the Kalavrytans woke to the sound of the church bells and German troops in the

streets. Everyone was signalled to go to the school, taking food for one day and a blanket each. At the school, all females and young boys were ordered into rooms on the north side of the building, and the men and youths

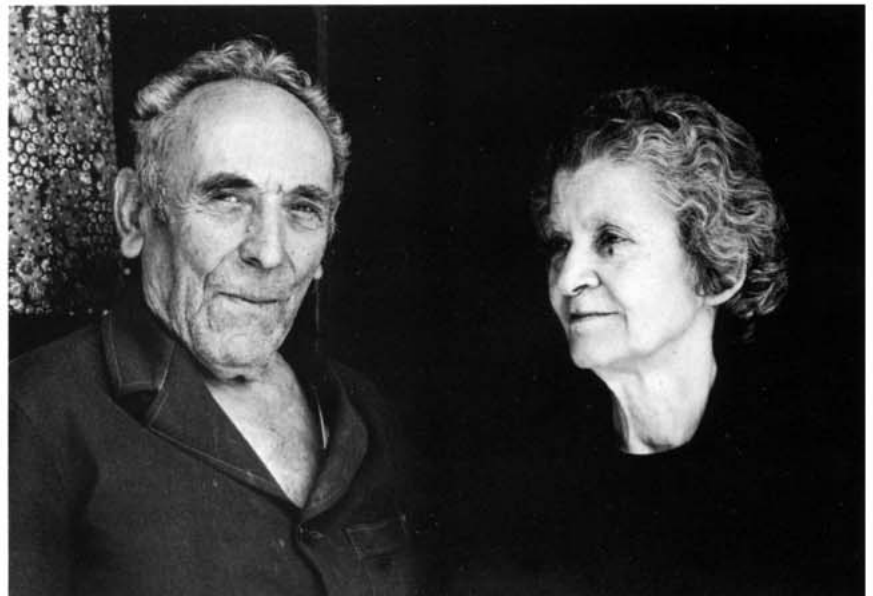
into the south rooms. Shortly after 9 a.m., the latter were marched off out of the town in three groups. Heading the last group was the local priest, Father Panagiotis Demopoulos, and a former lieutenant in the Greek Army, Panos Nikolaïdis, who had returned to Kalavryta to minister to disabled veterans.

The men were halted on a hillside overlooking the town, and held in a hollow on land belonging to a teacher, Kapi, under the watchful eye of guards from Kampfgruppe Ebersberger, manning machine guns. They were commanded by Hauptmann Egon Döhnert. For two hours, nothing beyond a head count of the men present occurred. Through a teacher of French they were told that Kalavryta would be destroyed and the population relocated, but that no harm would befall them. Then smoke began to rise all over the city as the Germans started to set fire to the buildings. About noon, the manager of the National Bank and the town treasurer were summoned and sent into town under escort. There they were made to open the vaults, which the Germans emptied. The pair returned about 1.30 p.m.

Sometime after 2 p.m., a green flare was fired from the city. The German guards moved positions. A second, red, flare went up. Döhnert gave a signal and eight machine guns opened up on the men huddled in the hollow. After about five minutes, the machine guns stopped and the Germans went round looking for signs of life, pulling bodies by arms or legs and giving a coup de grâce to any that stirred. At 2.34 p.m., the shooting finally stopped. Then, their work apparently complete, the firing party formed up and was marched back towards the burning town, singing.

There were 13 survivors from the massacre, one being Panos Nikolaïdes, who survived in spite of being hit three times. Another was Panais Sarantavgas who was unwounded.

Kalavryta itself was totally destroyed. Only eight houses out of perhaps 500 were left standing. The church was gutted, its roof finally collapsing at 10 p.m. that night, but the Bible in its glass case was virtually undamaged. The shops and remaining hotels were burned. The school also caught fire early in the afternoon (apparently from flying embers, not a deliberate act) but the women and children still being held there



Survivor. Panos Nikolaïdis, here with his wife, was a lieutenant in the Greek Army who fought with the 40th Light Infantry Regiment in Epirus in 1940–41. After the surrender, he returned to Kalavryta to take charge of disabled veterans and was caught up in the German reprisals. Although hit by three bullets, he survived, and has written up his experiences of that day.

were able to get out unharmed. However, they were barred by the Germans from going to see what had befallen their husbands and fathers and brothers, and it was not until four o'clock that they realised the full enormity of what had happened.

The Germans pulled out of Kalavryta that evening. Next day, Kampfgruppe Ebersberger put the historic monastery at Agia Lavra to the torch where, in 1821, the Greek War of Independence against the Turks had started.

And so ended Operation 'Kalavryta', the last of the series of Grossunternehmungen in the Peloponnese. Nevertheless, its ramifications were to continue long after the battle.

AFTER THE BATTLE

Although the Germans had gone, for the Greeks the agony was far from over. The winter of 1943-44 was a hard one in the high Peloponnese and even the partisans had to send part of their force home for lack of supplies. Deprived of shelter, clothes, and their menfolk, conditions for the starving women and remaining children of Kalavryta were desperate. The Red Cross, which first reached the town two days after the atrocity, tried to get food through, but the partisans continued to cut the lines of communication. It was only after long negotiations with both the partisans and the Germans, each of whom for their own reasons initially opposed its use, that limited supplies were able to get through on the rack and pinion railway which climbs steeply the 23 kilometres from Diakopto, south-east of Aigion, to Kalavryta. Meanwhile, with few tools to help them dig in the hard ground, the women laboured for two months to bury their dead, including several who had survived Kapi's field only to succumb from lack of aid.

Within days, the story of the events at Kalavryta was being widely discussed in Athens. The outside world heard later. On February 25, 1944, a *Daily Telegraph* special correspondent writing from Ankara included a somewhat distorted version in a general story under the headline 'German Savagery in Greece', and it was referred to in an article from Cairo published in the *Telegraph* three weeks later. But generally the story attracted little attention outside Greece.

When it reached the Greek authorities, the Prime Minister, Ioannis Rallis, who had taken office earlier in the year, wrote to Generalleutnant Wilhelm Speidel, Military Commander, Greece (later to become Rommel's chief-of-staff in northern France — see *After the Battle* No. 80) complaining of the savagery of the German action. He also



Above: The gutted remains of the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in the centre of Kalavryta. Below: The church was rebuilt after the war, with the original pillars left standing. Although the roof collapsed, the church Bible, which was standing on the lectern, suffered only scorch marks.



The rack and pinion railway, running from Diakopto to Kalavryta through a deep gorge, was the only way help could reach the destitute survivors. At first, neither the Germans (who needed the rolling stock to bring down wood fuel and feared partisans would sabotage it) nor the partisans (who believed it would be used to move troops against them) were prepared to allow the line to be used for supplies, but finally both agreed.



Left: In 1943-44, the locomotives were wood-burning steam trains like the one shown here. **Right:** Today, the engines are diesel-powered, seen here at Zachlorou, the station for the Mega Spileon monastery. The two villages of Upper and Lower Zachlorou were destroyed on December 4 in the early stages of Operation 'Kalavryta', the male inhabitants shot, and their bodies thrown into the gorge.



Left: Burned-out houses on Kernikis Prokopiou Street. Right: Completely rebuilt, Kalavryta is now a small but bustling administrative centre and resort.

pointed out the stupidity of the destruction of Kalavryta, which, he reminded Speidel, was the scene of a Turkish massacre during the War of Independence to which the Greeks would see a parallel. Speidel, in his response, alleged the support of the partisans by the populace. He said that both Kalavryta and the monastery at Mega Spileon were taken only after resistance was overcome, a statement contradicted by LXVIII. Armeekorps reports. He undertook to try to prevent such an incident recurring, but in the next breath offered as justification the heavy loss of life among German civilians in the Anglo-US air raids on German cities. He went on to urge support for the German army in its 'fight against international communism' as epitomised by the partisans.

This letter was no apology, but on January 13, 1944, Speidel wrote to Generaloberst Alexander Löhr, chief of Heeresgruppe E, complaining that the Kalavryta incident, by uniting the nationalists and the Communists in their resentment, had undermined German efforts to foster distrust between them. In clear reference to the burning of Agia Lavra, he added that historic monuments, specifically including monasteries, and works of art should not be damaged. But there was no question that the hostage policy be changed, only that its adverse effects for the Germans be minimised by better propaganda against the Communists. And the policy continued. In May 1944, the Peloponnese was created a 'battle zone' and martial law was declared throughout. In that month alone, LXVIII. Armeekorps reported killing 1,149 Greeks, including 671 shot as hostages.

Nor did the reprisals stop partisan activity. On December 31, 1943, the German commander in Corinth observed that 'since the reprisal action [at Kalavryta] was carried out, the number of attacks and sabotage has in no way diminished'. An intelligence map for January 1944 confirms this, showing activity continuing across the Peloponnese, particularly in the south but also including ambushes and demolitions on the Corinth-Aigion-Patras road. And as the German forces weakened in 1944, so the partisans everywhere became more effective.

Today, there is intense feeling by many Kalavrytans against the partisans for involving the town, and it is fair to ask what was gained for so high a price. It can be claimed that the Greek resistance played a key rôle in the Allies' plans to deceive the Axis about the direction of the Allied thrust into Europe — Churchill defended his support by arguing that it diverted two German divisions into Greece at the time of the Sicily landings in July 1943 — and it was later to slow the withdrawal of German divisions to the Eastern Front. However, its military value was much reduced by the open conflict between ELAS and right-wing partisan groups which broke out in October, and it was fear of an invasion through Greece rather than fear of the par-

tisans that caused the build-up of 273,000 German troops at that time. To the partisans' credit, from March 1, 1943 to October 15, 1944, the peak period of resistance, German records show 2,369 Germans killed, 4,204 wounded, and 1,810 missing in occupied Greece. Sixty-five per cent of these casualties

were inflicted between June and October 1944. But the cost was enormous. Even German records show 21,255 Greeks killed and 1,700 villages destroyed. Greek sources quote much higher figures and most victims were civilian non-combatants, caught between ruthless foes.



The gaunt and gutted buildings of 1944 (above) have now been swept away . . . save for one ruin (below left) which has been retained as a symbol of the destruction. Below right: Other evidence can be detected, like this house with a balcony but no second storey.





On the site of the massacre stands a memorial on which are carved the names of 1,300 men and boys from Kalavryta and nearby villages killed by the Germans.

After the war, a fine memorial was erected on the execution site outside Kalavryta. On the ridge above the amphitheatre stands a huge cross; on the slopes below are the carefully-tended graves of those few victims who were buried where they fell; the name of each of the victims (including, in a separate panel, those of 52 boys aged from 12 to 17 years) is carved on huge concrete slabs; and each is also commemorated by a flame burning in a small chapel buried in the side of the hill. A granite sculpture that symbolises the agony stands alongside. In the town cemetery, a quarter mile below the site, grave markers with three, four or five names bear witness to the families which lost as many as three male generations in one afternoon.

Except for one symbolic ruin, the town has been rebuilt and is a bustling administrative and, increasingly, tourist centre, but within the new church, the pillars of the old have been left standing. The clock in one tower is that from the old church, its hands frozen in time at 2.34 p.m., 'the moment that time stopped in Kalavryta'. Outside, there is a memorial to 'the good Father' Demopolous.

The school where both the German prisoners and, a few days later, the men and women of Kalavryta, were held, was rebuilt in 1946 in the same form. To mark the 50th anniversary, it is being converted to a museum documenting the tragedy. And Kalavryta is a founder member of the World Union of Cities for Peace which unites cities which have become symbols of the horrors caused by war and counts Coventry, Lidice and Dresden among its number. The strong 'no more war' stance of the post-war town authorities is spelled out in many languages on the roadway up the memorial.

Panos Nikolaïdes is one of only three survivors from the killing field still alive today; he and his wife run a general store near the centre of Kalavryta. Panais Sarantavgas, having survived the Germans unscathed, was to die shortly after the liberation at the hands of his fellow countrymen in

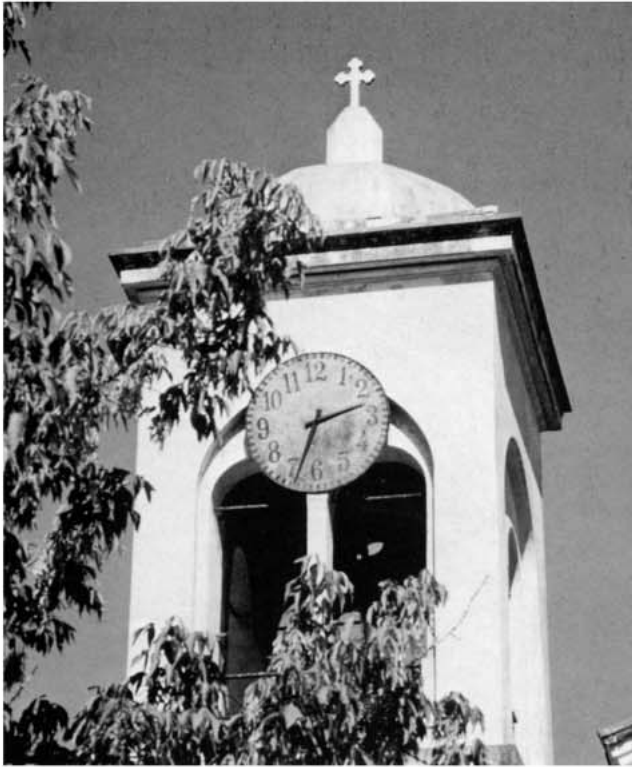
the bloody civil war which broke out less than a year after the Kalavryta incident as the Communists and nationalists struggled for control of the country. That further agony was to continue until 1949.

Since the war, many Germans have made gestures of atonement for the events of Unternehmen 'Kalavryta'. Presenting books for children at the high school in Kalavryta in 1961, Gebhard Seelos, then West German ambassador to Greece, expressed his shame and sorrow: 'Saddened, I bow my head [for the] victims of inhuman orders, with which today's Federal Republic of Germany has

nothing in common'. Scholarships in Germany for orphans of the massacre, and the gift of the old persons' home which stands above the newly-built city are further expressions of these sentiments. On December 13, 1993, as Kalavryta bowed its head in remembrance, German TV replayed a stark 45-minute documentary criticising the events of 50 years before. And amongst the dignitaries laying wreaths at the execution site that day was the German ambassador to Greece. His offering lay alongside that of the mayor of Warsaw, and those from other cities devastated during the war.



On a ridge above the site stands a giant cross, and nestled in the hillside is a chapel hung with lamps commemorating the victims.



Above: Frozen in time, the clock in one of the bell towers of the rebuilt church forever shows 2.34, the hour at which the guns fell silent in Kapi's field — 'the moment that time stopped in Kalavryta'. Right: The cover of the programme for the 46th anniversary of the Kalavryta massacre held in December 1989. Its dramatic symbolism says it all.



But there is another side. Veterans of the 117. Jäger-Division meet regularly to remember their exploits, most recently in Salzburg on September 11, 1993, and have launched furious verbal attacks at Eberhard Rondholz, the author of the documentary. And no case has been brought before any West German court charging wrongdoing during the German occupation of Greece. In the only case investigated under the German legal system of an officer who took part in Operation 'Kalavryta', the investigator at Bochum, having been presented with full details of the events, declared the operation 'legal' and 'acceptable' — a position for which support can be found in International Law — but felt it opportune to add that it had also been 'necessary under the circumstances' — a statement which caused grief in Greece and embarrassment in Germany.

The victors took another view. At Nuremberg, General Speidel and General Felmy, the LXVIII. Armeekorps commander, were tried for reprisals against civilians, and given terms of imprisonment. Felmy was also convicted of wanton destruction of property and looting. General Löhr was captured and tried in Belgrade, and hanged in 1947. General von Le Suire, commander of the 117. Jäger-Division, who had been taken prisoner on the Russian front, died in captivity in 1952. Of Major Ebersberger, who carried out the destruction of Kalavryta, there has been no trace. Hauptmann Döhnert, who led the firing party, is reputed to be living in Austria.

My interest in this story was prompted by a visit to Kalavryta with Andreas and Anna Zaimis, through whom I met many of the warm-hearted people of that attractive town. They and their son Fokion also reported to me on the 50th anniversary and helped with details of the area.

I was guided to sources and/or provided information by many people. Mrs Wichmann at the Wiener Library, London, and Keith

Sword at the University of London, launched me on my document search. Invaluable assistance was given by: John Hondros, whose book, *Occupation and Resistance: The Greek Agony, 1941-44*, Pella Publishers, N.Y., 1983, provides a detailed analysis of the resistance movement; Hagen Fleischer, who also sent me his summary of the Kalavryta incident prepared for the Report on the Military Service of Kurt Waldheim; Robert Herzstein, author of *Waldheim: The Missing Years*; and Eberhard Rondholz, who also sent me several documents including his paper (in Greek) *The Reprisals of the German Occupation Forces from the Proceedings of the 1st International Congress of Contemporary History, Athens 1989*.

My thanks are also due to Panos Polkas, former Mayor of Kalavryta who allowed me to copy photographs of the war years and gave me other materials; the late Thanos Tsaparas, publisher of *The Voice of Kalavryta* who gave me permission to copy and use the operations map for Operation 'Kalavryta' from his archives; Robin Cookson of the National Archives in Washington, D.C., the source of the other German records; Panos Nikolaidis and Stephanos Xamakiotis who shared their recollections; and Lorraine Ford in the City Secretary's Department, Coventry, who provided information on *The World Union of Cities for Peace*.

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Published sources for the Greek view of the events were: D. Kaldiris and P. Nikolaidis: *The Blackest Day of the Occupation*, 1963; and a typescript by P. Nikolaidis, 1970; Dimitris Kaldiris: *The Tragedy of Kalavryta*, 1973, translated by Mary Jane McNally Crotty as *The Drama of Kalavryta*, 1989; Ilia Papasteropolou: *Tragedy at Kalavryta (13.12.1943)*, 1976; Francesca Nika: *Kala-*

vryta 1943; and Jeanne Tsatsos: *The Sword's Fierce Edge*, trans. by Jean Demos, Vanderbilt UP, 1969.

Reference was also made to: John Keegan: *The Second World War*, Hutchinson, London 1989, which is the source of the title quote by a Nuremberg prosecutor; Winston S. Churchill: *Closing the Ring*, Cassell, London 1952; Chester Wilmot: *The Struggle for Europe*, Collins, London 1952; Herbert Kubly: *Gods and Heroes*, Doubleday, New York 1969; and Mark Mazower: *Inside Hitler's Greece*, Yale UP, New Haven and London 1993, a new study which provides a useful overview of the politics of the occupation period.



In December 1993, a wreath is laid on behalf of the President of the German Republic.