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THE ALLIED MILITARY MISSION IN NORTHWEST MACEDONIA  
1943-44

In this article I am publishing, with the permission of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, a selection of the papers which Captain P. H. Evans brought out of Macedonia in late November 1944 and entrusted to me recently. The papers consist mainly of signals which were 'in clear', i.e. before being encoded for transmission by wireless. These signals were sent out or received by Evans' station on Mt. Vitsi which had the code-name FERTILIZER. He was in communication with the AMM HQ\* of West Macedonia, of which the

*\* The following abbreviations are used:*

ALO	Allied Liaison Officer
AML	Allied Military Liaison
AMM	Allied Military Mission
Bde	Brigade
BLO	British Liaison Officer
BMM	British Military Mission
Bn	Battalion
CO	Commanding Officer
Coy	Company
EA	National Welfare
EAM	National Liberation Front
EDES	National Republican Greek League
EES	National Greek Army
EKKA	National and Social Liberation
ELAS	National People's Liberation Army
GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC	General Officer Commanding
HMG	Heavy Machine Gun
HMG	His Majesty's Government
HQ	Headquarters
LMG	Light Machine Gun
LRDG	Long Range Desert Group
MG	Machine Gun
MMG	Medium Machine Gun
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer

station was called BOODLE, and also with SOE GHQ Cairo, which was known simply as Cairo. The signals which he brought out are only a part of those which were sent at the time (for instance, there are very few QQQ signals, which were particularly urgent), but they give a representative picture of events in the Vitsi area from 23 March to 15 November. They are of historical importance as primary evidence, since they were composed at the time by the CO of the AMM station throughout that period.

In addition to the signals there are letters, reports, orders, notes, receipts etc. which were issued at the time. There are two reports by Evans. One dated 7 August 1944 is an 'Introductory Report on Sub-Area Vitsi', which consists of the boundaries of the area, accessibility to Germans, population, armed villages and Independent Macedonia. The other undated but probably written early in 1945 gave a full account of Evans' activities from September 1943 to December 1944, his commentary on matters of general interest, and ten Appendices. There are also some papers in Greek, being orders issued by ELAS HQ Vitsi or GHQ 9 Div, excerpts from contemporary newspapers, and a long report mainly on the Bulgarian contacts of the armed villages, which is unsigned, undated and of doubtful veracity.

Patrick Hutchinson Evans, born 1. 12. 13, volunteered for service in occupied Greece. He parachuted into Greece on 15 September 1943 and joined the AMM of West Macedonia at Pentalophos as a Lieutenant. He conducted a Commando and Demolition course for selected ELAS Andartes there, and

OG	American equivalent of RSR
PAO	Panhellenic Liberation Army
PEEA	Political Committee of National Liberation
QMS	Quarter-Master Sergeant
RSR	Raiding Support Regiment
SMG	Sub Machine Gun
SNOF	Slaboden Narodn Ondofascistky Front (Liberation National Antifascist Front)
SOE	Special Operations Executive
YBE	Defenders of Northern Greece

*References to other books are abbreviated as follows:*

- Apple* : C. M. Woodhouse, *Apple of Discord* (London, 1948).  
*DM* : N. G. L. Hammond, *Δυτική Μακεδονία: Ἀντίσταση καὶ Συμμαχική Στρατιωτική Ἀποστολή 1943-1944* (Athens, 1992) being the Greek translation by P. I. Papathanasiou of the forthcoming book 'The Allied Military Mission and the Andartes in West Macedonia, 1943-44'.  
*Venture* : N. G. L. Hammond, *Venture into Greece with the Guerrillas 1943-1944* (London, 1983), of which the Greek version by G. Lampsas was published in Athens as *Περιπέτεια μὲ τοὺς Ἀντάρτες 1943-44*.

he carried out reconnaissances in command of British and other personnel in the area north of Pendalophos. During the civil war between ELAS and EDES he was engaged in Welfare operations for the people of the burnt villages and for the Italians in Pindus villages. He kept a number of papers which concerned these operations. During February and early March 1944 he was in charge of the work which resulted in the provision of a landing-strip near Grevena — the papers for which I have not used in this article. On 23 March 1944 he set up the first AMM station in the Vitsi area, and he was in command of it until late in November 1944, with the rank of Captain (he became Major later). He had a good knowledge of modern Greek, and also of German and French, and he had a flair for descriptive writing, which he had developed as a journalist in civilian life. He intended to publish a book, based on these papers, but he was prevented by ill health. In summer 1990 he asked me to take over the papers and publish what I might consider to be of historical value. I am very grateful for his help.

In the first part of this article the Welfare operations in West Macedonia are described much more fully than elsewhere. In the second part the activities in the Vitsi area of AMM, ELAS, Komitaji, Germans and Partisans of Yugoslavia and Albania are reported in a coherent manner with sub-headings, under which the relevant selected signals and papers are cited. I have added introductory and explanatory passages which are sometimes marked off by square brackets. My qualification for making such additions is that I was CO in Macedonia from May 1943 into January 1944, Chief Liaison Officer with GHQ ELAS thereafter, and Acting Commander of AMM from May to August 1944. Thus much of the background is familiar to me. The papers have been deposited with the consent of P. H. Evans in the Liddell Hart Centre of Military Archives at King's College London.

## PART I. WELFARE BY AMM FOR GREEK VILLAGERS AND FOR ITALIANS

### *1. The burnt villages and the feeding of the Italians*

The Italians and the Germans responded to guerrilla warfare by attacking defenceless villages, where they killed any villagers, removed stock and burnt the houses. This form of atrocity was practised in West Macedonia much more by the Germans than by the Turks against the Arabs and T. E. Lawrence. The first instances were in spring 1943 after the defeat and surrender of an Italian battalion in a battle with the Andartes, and most of the villages bet

ween Siatista and Grevena were burnt at that time. As most of the refugees from these villages were destitute when they returned to the ruins, HQ 9 Div of ELAS asked me to provide gold sovereigns which were to be distributed to those in need by EA, the Welfare branch of EAM. Because I distrusted ELAS and EA, I asked each burnt village to form a committee of the priest, the schoolmaster and the 1941 president, which would draw up a list of those in need, and I arranged that sovereigns would be issued only by an Officer of the Mission to individual recipients in the presence of the committee. This system was employed in summer 1943.

ELAS occasionally defended a village against attack by Italian forces but not against attack by German forces<sup>1</sup>. For instance Skalokhori lost only eleven houses when Italians attacked it, but on 4 August 1943 Germans burnt almost every house, killing the priest and a man of ninety who had not run away. It was said then that the Germans had been accompanied by 'Ekkatzidhes' in the uniform of Greek officers — a blatant piece of EAM propaganda at the expense of EKKA, a rival organisation, which had taken the field farther south and was attacked by ELAS that summer. Evans gave examples of ELAS failing to defend the villages against such attacks:

'On 4 October I was on high ground and watched Vrakhos, Vitsista and Nestorion being burnt by a German column from Kastoria and Argos Orestikon. They had burnt Langa on the previous evening. All these villages were on the front of 1 Battalion 28 Regiment of ELAS. The OC of the Regiment told me later that the German force included about 400 Italians, some Komitaji and EKKA personnel, which latter I doubt, and that their strength was 600 to 700. ... I saw no real fighting. The only opposition was MG fire at 1500 metres and over. The Andarte tactics were to sit safely on distant ridges. The Poles serving with us (having escaped from German forces) told me that in their experience the Germans would have withdrawn immediately if one Company of Andartes had counterattacked. ... Germans withdraw in afternoon and burnt Melanthion on the way. OC 28 Regiment said that German success was due to greater mobility. In fact it was because the Andartes as usual considered Germans as supermen and would not fight at close quarters'.

'On 18 October I was at Nestorion which the Germans, advancing from the area of Pentavryso[s], entered that afternoon to burn the three remaining houses. During the middle of that day I watched sporadic fighting round the river crossing, where the German force was of one section and one armoured car. Andarte tactics were as before. I discovered afterwards that the Andartes

1. See *Venture* 32 for a similar instance.

in forward positions had mostly dropped their arms and fled at the approach of the Germans. ... The Andartes were all 1500 metres or more away, except for one MG nest which was mopped up by the German section through lack of alertness. At 1500 hours thirty Germans formed up behind an armoured car, entered the village unopposed to burn houses, rejoined the main body several kilometres away, and returned to Kastoria the same evening. The reason for Andarte failure was lack of courage due to absence of discipline. While the OC 1st Battalion is a competent, aggressive officer, his subalterns, NCOs and men will not hold fast and obey orders. The general condition here is that the Germans fear the Andartes and the Andartes fear the Germans, but the Germans have taken the initiative and got the upper hand. If the Andartes showed real fight, the Germans would be confined to the towns and main roads, but the Andartes on this front have very little discipline under fire. There is no hope of improvement until this is put right'.

Evans was recalled by me on 19 October when I knew that ELAS had attacked EDES in the start of a civil war which was to last until 29 February 1944. My immediate recommendation that relief should be stopped was accepted by GHQ Middle East, whereas in Thessaly and Roumeli payments to EA were continued. HQ 9 Div blockaded the Mission at Pentalophos, but in December it found itself compelled to accept the conditions on which I insisted for a renewal of relief<sup>2</sup>. Evans preserved copies of the Agreement which I had composed in Greek and in English. The latter ran as follows:

'1. In every village where are situated victims of arson, refugees by reason of enemy attack, families of war casualties, families of war hostages, and disabled people of the 1940-41 war, the priest, schoolmaster and *proedros* and two of the war victims, whom the war victims themselves shall elect freely and democratically, shall be members of the aid committee. If one of the first three is missing or does not enjoy the confidence of the war victims the war victims shall choose a deputy. This committee shall prepare lists of the war victims in need and shall examine the needs of each family.

'2. Members of the AMM will visit each village and after examining the lists will give to the families in person assistance. I shall be grateful if the district doctors and the district priests assist the AMM. The HQ 9 Div is free to send both Andartes and representatives of the HQ, who will advise the Mission on the representatives forming the committees in areas under German control.

'3. The district doctors, or if they are missing the doctors conscripted

2. See *Venture* 103 f. and 111; and *DM* 39.

into ELAS, will estimate the medical needs of the war victims and will report to AMM.

'4. HQ 9 Div will give freedom of movement specifically for this work to the members of the Mission. When danger exists for the entry of AMM, the officer representative of HQ 9 Div on the spot and the officer of AMM on the spot will reach agreement as to how far they can proceed, or if they do not agree will not pass into the area under dispute but will make a report to their superior officers.

'5. If the question is asked in the village 'Whence comes the aid?' the answer shall be 'Gift of the Allies'.

'6. Where they cannot proceed, the AMM will call the committee of the village, or as many members of the committee as are able, to come to a centre. If the officer of AMM thinks fit, he will give the aid and the committee will be obliged to bring the nominal receipts.

'Since the AMM has not the order to assist the destitute families of the Andartes as a separate category, the AMM promises to request GHQ Middle East to permit the assistance of these also.

'The AMM promises to give the aid in accordance with the above conditions.

'The HQ 9 Div promises to assist the AMM in this work in accordance with the above terms.

'Agreed on 18.12.43 at Pendalophos by EGGS and by KARAYIANNIS (GOC 9 Div), having been written by EGGS and the translation made by him'.

After the first distribution of relief which took place in 19-24 December 1943 HQ 9 Div issued to the committees in the villages a set of instructions which was composed in agreement with me. It included the following clauses.

'The distribution is an experiment in West Macedonia alone. There is no certainty that it will occur again, and no probability that if it does occur again it will be expanded to include other categories. Continuation depends on the needs of the Allies and on the sincere cooperation of each committee and of each village.

'The duty of each committee, as it is responsible to the Allies, is to list only those who are starving, provided they belong to the stated category. For that reason the committee is obliged to examine strictly the needs of each category, because this aid is aid against death.

'The duty of those who accept the gift is to buy foodstuffs at once. Gold is given only because we cannot give foodstuffs, as the Red Cross does.

'The Western Macedonians should understand that this winter there will be greater danger of starvation than hitherto. All who can move to more

well-off areas where the Red Cross operates should go. Those who stay in the mountain villages must help one another. The Allies care for you with their blood and when they give a gift in time of war that gift is necessarily small and perhaps may not be enough to cover the needs of the various starving nations'.

Instructions were added in the light of experience gained in 19-24 December, and in particular any complaint was to be addressed not to the HQ of the Mission but to the local committee, so that it could be considered by the Officer of the Mission on the spot.

Evans was one of the officers distributing relief then and subsequently. He had to be on the alert. For instance, Aleko Karadzios, while serving as an Andarte, had a serious head wound and was destitute in the village Aetomilitsa, whereas his family lived in Pefkofito, a village in the area administered by Captain Backhouse. Because Karadzios had a certificate from the hospital, Evans felt justified in giving him aid despite the rule that relief could be given only in the village where the family was residing. At the same time he had to write urgently to Captain Backhouse to avoid a double payment. On another tour of villages between Pendalophos and Argos Orestikon he drew up the following report:

'In several villages my attention was caught by the large number of men presenting themselves with doctor's certificates to the effect that they were disabled and incapable of any kind of work. These certificates were signed by Doctor X. On 10 January I called on Doctor X in village Z to discuss the category of the disabled which he was interpreting much more widely than I under the terms of my order was able to do. During the course of the discussion he declared without my having mentioned either directly or indirectly the subject of money, that he had taken no payment for any of the certificates he had made out. The next day at village Y several men told the Divisional Representative that the doctor had demanded payment from them for the certificate of disablement; and the commander of the Vitsi Battalion told me that several men had come to him with complaints of the same thing. I have made this report so that HQ 9 Div can take whatever action they think fit'.

The system of administering relief which we had introduced in West Macedonia was adopted in all ELAS areas north of the Gulf of Corinth, when they passed under my command from late January onwards. It made considerable demands on Officers of the Mission who often had to sleep in the severe weather in a hovel or a lean-to alongside twenty or thirty villagers. But the relief certainly saved many lives, especially of young children, and our

personal supervision did ensure that the gold sovereigns bought food for the starving.

Another relief problem arose in the hard winter of 1943-44. When Italy surrendered on 8 September 1943, the Pinerolo Division of 15,000 men with all its equipment marched to Kalabaka and agreed to serve under the command of GHQ Middle East<sup>3</sup>. Since it was impossible to feed so many men at one place, the Italians were divided into groups. One group of 4,000 was allocated to West Macedonia, but before it reached Grevena the soldiers were persuaded by the oratory of General Kalabalikis to lay down their arms on the written promise that ELAS would feed them on the same rations as the Andartes received. The men were sent to camps in high Pindus villages, in order to be safer from the Germans who executed any member of the Division as a traitor. HQ 9 Div tried to trick me into paying sovereigns for their upkeep by placing them on the nominal roll of ELAS, but I refused and held ELAS to its written promise.

With the equipment and ammunition of the Pinerolo Division ELAS launched an attack on EDES in October 1943. GHQ Middle East condemned ELAS for starting the civil war and stopped all airborne supplies to ELAS. Consequently HQ 9 Div soon found itself unable to feed the Italians, and rather than let them starve I undertook in December to take them over on my own terms in the presence of Karatzas (the ELAS commander) and of the Italian C.O.<sup>4</sup>. I appointed an Italian officer (Captain Castiglione) to supervise parties of Italians, which were sent to collect from Grevena and nearby markets supplies purchased by ELAS at prices agreed by the ELAS QMS and myself. I then went to inspect the Italians who were brought together on parade at Dhoutsiko. After my departure from Macedonia Evans visited Dhoutsiko and made the following report on 17 February 1944:

'1. Dhoutsiko committee cannot buy anything but salt, oil, lentils, beans, chick-peas, raisins and sugar. HQ 9 Div told them two days ago not to buy wheat and maize in the eparchy of Grevena but to send via civilians selected by ELAS to Siatista and Kozani (both German-occupied).

'2. All prices for the committee were fixed by ELAS and all sovereigns were changed by ELAS QMS.

'3. Other committees here are from Prosvaro and Mesolouri, but they come only on Friday evening to leave on Sunday or Monday, the market being on Saturday.

3. See *Apple* 161 f.; *Venture* 98 f.

4. *Venture* 111 f.



- '4. Prosvoro has sometimes only about six soldiers with no officer.
- '5. Dhoutsiko committee says it is impossible that any committee bought rye at 60 okes per sovereign.
- '6. Dhoutsiko has supplies now for the rest of February.
- '7. Dhoutsiko committee is satisfied with ELAS cooperation.
- '8. An Italian officer from Deskati who arrived here last Saturday, having fled twice from the Germans, told the Italians here that in accordance with an agreement between HMG and the Italian Government the AMM was giving each Italian officer 1 sovereign a month and two other ranks one sovereign a month. That, he said, was the rate in the area of 10 Div.
- '9. Medicines. These people bought 8 sovereigns worth yesterday, because there is dysentery in the camp, and because the medicines (quinine etc.) sent from Pendalophos about a month ago were only a small quantity and had run out. The Medical Officer says the men will die if not given medicine. There are also 80 to 100 cases of malaria. Meanwhile I told them to buy no more medicine until I obtain an answer from my HQ.
- '10. These people are worrying about the rate of 1 sovereign to 3 soldiers (? too little). Will it be increased? They say that to transport wheat from Kozani to Dhoutsiko will be much more expensive.
- '11. Does the Italian Government know about the Italians in Greece? What is their position?

It is evident that control over ELAS HQ had weakened. The final solution was that Italians were billeted with villagers and worked the land in return for food, while the AMM paid the villager one third of a sovereign a month. This system was developed in Thessaly by Major P. Worrall. He formed also two camps, one for sick Italians and the other for 'bad' Italians as a penitentiary. Casualties occurred mainly during drives when the Germans killed all Italians taken prisoner, and in Albania and Yugoslavia, through which countries ELAS said that Italians could walk home.

## PART II. THE AMM AND THE ANDARTES IN THE VITSI AREA

### *2. First weeks in the Vitsi area*

My plan to send Evans and Sergeant Kite to set up a station on Mt Vitsi lapsed when I was posted to AMM HQ and Lt-Col. Edmonds took over the command, which was now restricted to West Macedonia. In February Kite reconnoitred the Vitsi area, and Evans was sent to Grevena where he organi-

sed the construction of a landing-ground for aircraft. Thereafter Evans (now Captain), Lt. Zotos (temporarily), Sergeant Kite, two British wireless-operators, and 21 Andartes whom Evans and others had trained in demolition and commando operations at Pendalophos established their first HQ on Vitsi on 23 March. They had a convoy of 45 mule-loads of supplies, and their Andartes were armed with a Light Mortar and 2 Breda LMGs. Evans and Kite already knew the ELAS commanders, Lytrides and Arrianos. They were co-operative. Indeed they sent to Evans on 9 April their report of recent actions by ELAS. On 2 April they fought a battle against Germans between Ano Hydrousa and Drosopiysi, inflicting seven casualties and suffering one; and on 4 April between Triantaphyllia and Vapsori, inflicting some 40 casualties and suffering two. On the latter date two other German groups reached Vapsori and Sidherokhori. Evans and his party had time to escape from Vapsori.

On 8 April Evans stated in a wireless message: 'SNOF, standing for Slaboden Narodn Ondofasistky Front, means Liberation National Anti-fascist Front and is, as far as I can see, ELAS under a Slav name. Have not seen a Slav equivalent of EAM. Know nothing of SNOF relations with Bulgaria; imagine same as those of EAM-ELAS. Here SNOF is used as synonym for EAM or ELAS indiscriminately. A few members of units here wear initials SNOF instead of ELAS on their cap-badges. The use of the Slav name is example of EAM's policy for minorities which is modelled on Russian policy'. He noted that the 8 Poles and Czechs operating as Commandos were particularly useful as they understood the Slav language of Vitsi Andartes. On 12 April Evans attended the first day of a three-day SNOF conference at Dhen-drokhori and resisted much pressure to make a speech. Representatives had come from villages in regions of Prespa, Florina, Kastoria and Amyntaion. 'Presence [of] Allied Officer among this mixed and wavering population helps unity against Germans, but EAM always trying to trap one into endorsing their internal political aim'.

On 9 April Evans sent to Edmonds a report of which I give a summary [with my additions in square brackets]:

1. The political situation among the Slav-speaking villages of the Vitsi area is complex. [Evans listed 32 in the regions of Florina and Kastoria; 3 more 80% Slav and 2 50% Slav; 1 Rumanian-speaking and one 50% Rumanian]. They may be divided into three classes. (1) 'Komitaji villages', which have accepted arms from the Bulgarian 'Komitato'<sup>5</sup> or from the Germans.

5. The Bulgarians occupied Greece east of the river Strymon, but they also had re-

Their armed bands may attack us, they restrict the movements of the Andartes, and they report our whereabouts to the Germans. ELAS has invaded some such villages, executed 'traitors' and terrified the villagers into submission. (2) 'Converted villages', won over by EAM propaganda. The villagers were already anti-royalist, because they associated with the king the repressive measures of Metaxas; so they liked EAM's detestation of the king [and their men approved of the oath which ELAS recruits had to take, that they would stay in ELAS until a plebiscite determined whether the king would return to Greece or not]. On the positive side 'pseudo-communism is strong here. The internationale is sung and the clenched hand is raised in greeting'. There was little knowledge of communism, which was vaguely associated with EAM's Utopian 'laocracy'<sup>6</sup>. But the conversion remains fragile; for [in language and tradition] they have sympathies with the Bulgarian 'Komitato'. (3) 'Loyal villages', which have fully accepted EAM-ELAS with its war of liberation and its propaganda. One of these was Vapsori, where Evans established his first HQ. [Accessibility to one or other side was also a factor, because ELAS was as ready as the Germans to burn a hostile village].

2. Stores should be sent from Pendalophos to us only by night, dumps of supplies must be kept secret and we must be ready to move with prearranged rations at very short notice. For this area constitutes an intermediate stage between enemy-occupied territory and 'Free Greece'<sup>7</sup>.

3. ELAS forces here number about 550 armed men, mainly at Vapsori and Dhendrokhori, and a reserve of 1000 mostly unarmed. The Commanding Officer, Lytridhis, 'is in command on paper', deals with HQ 9 Div and heads the administration. The operational command lies with the 'Kapetanios', Arrianos, thanks to his dominant personality, quickness of decision, and military leadership; for 'his best quality is that he is an instinctive leader, a man with just the right amount of fire to make men follow and obey'. 'He is a democratic anti-royalist who does not like Communism but is careful not to say so in the hearing of other Greeks'. Evans found him inaccurate but not dishonest, and he intended to work with him in planning future operations.

representatives in Macedonia, e.g. at Kastoria. These representatives collaborated actively with the Italians, but they seem to have been little used by the Germans after the collapse of Italy.

6. This word was coined to serve instead of 'democracy', which had lost its original connotation.

7. This was the name given by EAM-ELAS to the mountainous area which was entered by the German forces only in strength.

4. The overall policy of AMM was to 'lie low' until such time as the withdrawal of German forces from Greece should commence, and then to launch continuous attacks under the code-name 'Noah's Ark'. Evans wanted now to give his Andarte commandoes experience in fighting by 'attacks on Komitaji villages, ambushing of Germans, attacks on German guard-posts, and defence of villages'; to reconnoitre targets with Major Scott; and to concert plans with Lytridhis and Arrianos. He foresaw much action during Noah's Ark, because Vitsi overlooks the road and railway system leading to the Monastir Gap, through which Germans would leave for Yugoslavia, and also the communications via Florina and Pisoderi with Albania.

5. He proposed to communicate with Edmonds by runners attached to AMM rather than by ELAS runners. Wireless communication via Cairo or Italy was slower.

At this time Evans signalled to Edmonds that 'anti-Quisling and anti-Komitaji operations were indispensable preliminaries to test worth of Andartes, clear ground of superfluous obstacles before time comes to strike main enemy, and to embarrass them'. Edmonds agreed that they were necessary 'but we must not be too closely connected with them'. On 23 April Evans reinforced his arguments for these operations, saying that the Komitaji villages formed an enemy front line, hindered attacks on Germans, and 'if not smashed now will be a nuisance when we attack road targets in Noah's Ark'.

Before a reply came to Evans' report, Kite took part in actions of 'our forces' as follows. On 14 April five Armenians were killed and seven were taken prisoner near Kraniona. These Armenians, conscripted into the Russian army, had been captured, maltreated by Germans and accepted arms as the alternative to death by starvation. On 15 April 150 Germans retaliated by moving towards Kraniona and Mavrokampos, and a column of Komitaji reached the heights of Sidherokhori. They carried off supplies and withdrew before our forces could reach them and engage. On the night of 18-19 April Kite accompanied as an observer the ELAS troops which made a night-attack on Perikopi which 'was harbouring Komitaji'. Fighting lasted from 4 a.m. to 7.45 a.m. with enemy losses estimated at 30 to 40 and ELAS losses 6 dead and 5 wounded. Eighteen houses of the village were burnt. Kite noted that the Komitaji were better armed especially with SMGs and hand-grenades. He judged Arrianos a very good leader, the quality of the Andartes first-rate, and the forces worthy of better weapons and more ammunition. 'The high standard of discipline', he wrote, 'I attribute entirely to Arrianos; he has

complete control of his officers and men, and they have complete confidence in him'<sup>8</sup>.

A woman from Perikopi who was removed for interrogation said that 120 or so Komitaji from four villages rounded up the people of Perikopi and announced: 'We have got an order from Kaltchef<sup>9</sup> and the Germans that you are to take arms to defend your village against the guerrillas who are trying to bring England here and reimpose the old Greek regime', i.e. the king and the dictatorship. A few men of Perikopi went to Kastoria to fetch arms, then more and more, but they were not all armed when ELAS attacked.

On 17 April Evans reported the arrival at his station of a Captain Macdonald with five members of his Mission and the 1st and 2nd Brigades of Zone 3 of Tito's Partisans on their way ultimately to ground north-east of Lake Ochrid. In conversation Macdonald and the O. C. 2nd Brigade said that no SNOF unit had penetrated north of the Greek-Yugoslav border so far. Evans described the relations of the Partisans with the EAM politicians as outwardly good, but he believed that the Partisans in reality despised all Greeks. 'Also I suspect all but most extreme EAM members feel involuntary nationalistic resentment towards representatives of an Independent Macedonia' [that being the aim of Tito]. He knew that ELAS was collaborating with the Partisans, because he had been at Pendalophos when Tzimas — a leading Communist — passed through on his way to stay at Tito's HQ<sup>10</sup>.

On 27 April the ELAS Battalion was holding elections to send representatives to Pendalophos. 'I hear all ELAS units are doing so as part of a move to form a provisional government'. [This had already been done in Albania and Yugoslavia, where rival organisations had been liquidated or rendered impotent. The elections were an indication that ELAS expected the Germans to withdraw soon and themselves to set up a Government in Athens]<sup>11</sup>.

On 30 April Evans received Edmonds' reply. The new development was the destruction on 17 April of EKKa by ELAS on the orders of PEEA, thereby clearing the way for a descent on Athens. For this renewal of civil war GHQ Middle East stopped all supplies to ELAS except for any immediate operations against the enemy. Accordingly Edmonds could not obtain further supplies and ammunition for Vitsi ELAS. He wanted Evans to concentrate

<sup>8</sup> Kite's report is cited in full in *DM* 108-10.

<sup>9</sup> He was a Bulgarian representative at Kastoria (see n. 5 above).

<sup>10</sup> See *Venture* 108; the pseudonym of Tzimas was Samariniotis.

<sup>11</sup> For the setting up of PEEA as the Government of 'Free Greece' on 25 March 1944 see *Apple* 186 and *Venture* 132 f.

on 'auxiliary targets such as petrol dumps', and he passed on a directive from Cairo on 'interim operations' (i.e. pre-Noah's-Ark) as follows:

'1. Intention: prevent withdrawal further Hun troops from Greece between now and start of phase III of Noah's Ark.

'2. Method: attacks on opportunity targets such as small road convoys or detachments, railway engines, derailments etc. To be done away from main safe-harbour areas to avoid Hun interference there. Capture enemy equipment for use by guerrillas. Reduce risks reprisals to minimum, and try kill those responsible for their organisation'.

During these weeks Evans had established a regular system of information which was gathered by EAM agents in Florina and Kastoria and relayed to Evans HQ. He was able to send to Cairo a full account of enemy strengths at various places, troop movements by road and rail, goods traffic, and suitable targets for air attack. His proximity to both centres made this information particularly valuable, because it was up-to-date and relevant; for he had been trained in military intelligence and had instructed some Andartes in the art on courses at Pendalophos. There were reports in March of the Germans' efforts to recruit 'Security Battalions' (Greeks armed against the Andartes) in Florina and elsewhere. Names of collaborators were given and rival organisations such as EDES and PAO were said to be promoting the Security Battalions [there was no need to besmirch EKKA any more]<sup>12</sup>.

### *3. A period of difficulty and frustration*

In a signal of 1 May Evans reported to Edmonds on relations between the Partisans and ELAS as follows:

'30 April Lytridhis and Arrianos told me "28 or 29 April Serb Partisans attacked Hun Armenian garrison of Vigla Pisoderiou. Armenians there have been for days in communication with us via political organisation. One Armenian had already deserted and has been acting as go-between at risk his life. Via him we had told Armenians to desert with all your arms, ammn and mules and were waiting answer when Partisans attacked. Lytridhis and Arrianos added Hun has now increased garrison at Vigla. They say Partisans did not consult them before attack and had no right conduct any ops on Greek soil without ELAS permission. Also that Partisans using receipts system

12. See DM 29 with a note by P. I. Papathanasiou.

commandeered more food than villagers can afford and make secret propaganda against Greeks to Slav-speaking population'.

'My comments. Believe first part is true, also that Partisans did not consult ELAS before attack. Do not know if propaganda allegation is true and am keeping out of that hornets' nest. Partisan unit was at Trivouno morning of 30 April and is probably part of 2 Brigade making diversion for passage of 1 Brigade through Prespa. This lack of coordination, if not remedied soonest, will make serious trouble between ELAS and Partisans, also spoil Ark, as Pisoderi for instance is on Ark target 10, also will attract Hun drives which Vitsi Bn cannot hope to repel. Will take no steps, only look pleasant and keep mum till you send instructions. Arrianos and Lytridhis both nationalistic under skin but fairly amenable. My only action so far, evening 30 April sent courteous but firm note to Partisan commander area Trivouno ... (illegible line) make no attacks in ELAS areas without consulting ELAS and AMM as otherwise any offensive plans of Partisans, ELAS, AMM and Allied GHQ under whose orders we all are will fail. Coord and coop essential, and until these achieved by triangular discussion please hold your hand. Will send full text soonest'.

During the night of 8 May Vitsi ELAS attacked 814 Armenian Battalion. 'Vitsi Detachment captured 85 Armenians with their weapons, 2 Huns, 60 Hun rifles, 8 Russian auto rifles, 5 Russian LMGs, 4 Breda LMGs, 1 Maxim HMG, 28 pistols and revolvers, 1 telephone, 2 artillery horses, quantity ammn for auto weapons. Remainder of Armenians scattered towards Serb and Albanian Partisans. Thus 814 Armenian Battalion considered finished as Hun unit. Above infn from Detachment Commanders and probably reliable'. ELAS added the material to its armoury.

Evans was urged on 4 May to 'try keep in touch with Deyan<sup>13</sup> or nearest Partisan leader to you for coordination in emergencies'. He commented on the effect of Tito's Partisans being on Greek soil in a signal of 13 May. 'The population in many villages here is in a quandary, because does not love Greece, yet hesitates to back Bulgaria and Axis and will follow whoever looks strongest. One result of this is that Ind Mac will probably be strong here [an Independent Macedonia being the policy of Tito's Partisans and of Russia]. When Partisan Brigades were here, Arrianos asked them to cooperate in attacking Komitaji villages, but Abbas [Tito's political officer in South Yugoslavia] declined'. On 18 May Evans sent a signal via Cairo to Edmonds on the subject.

13. Deyan was the Serb commander in the Prespa region.

'Believe present locations 1 Brigade and 2 Brigade of Zone 3 of Tito's Partisans are respectively Ochrid and Kaïmaktsalan ("Cream-stealer" in Turkish, the cream being the snow-cap). On 16 May Arrianos and these Brigades in transit through [this] area recently and also Prespa. Partisans currently have been making propaganda to Slav population: "ELAS are Fascists out for Greek territorial integrity and will oppress you. We are Communists and will liberate you". Arrianos says Partisans are out for Independent Macedonia which "is an old Bulgar trick"<sup>14</sup> and says there is increased Komitaji activity in the area Dhendrokhori-Prespa due to this. I told him, as before, if any trouble between him and Partisans, inform me at once. He has already sent for the politikos Athanatos to [come to] Prespa to "negotiate" but I think to put foot down. He would have told me none of this had I not pressed him. My comments. Suspect allegations are substantially true for following reasons. (1) Abbas, when at Vapsori, refused to help ELAS attack Komitaji villages and told me "I could win them all over to the Allies by political means". (2) After the attack on Sidherokhori in May Lazos, leader of Komitaji there, said in a taunting letter to Arrianos: "If you were real Allies you would wear red star like the Partisans, not the nationalist badge", taking the E of ELAS to stand for "Hellenic" [in fact the E stood for 'Ethnikos', National]. (3) There is other evidence that Mac nationalist spirit is nascent or resurgent here. Believe Independent Macedonia tendency is quite separate from Komitato<sup>15</sup>. MacDonald told me that 2 Brigade who are Macs as well as 1 Brigade who are Serbs hate the Bulgars more than the Huns.

'Do not think SNOF generally speaking has overcome local Slavs' deep-seated distrust of Greeks. Only mediation I shall undertake without instructions from you will be to quell urgent squabbles, e.g. armed clash if such arose. Arrianos is already planning to send a platoon to Prespa "to fight Komitaji" but it might be to fight Ind Macs. Can B2 do anything? It might prevent trouble if Deyan had a Mission attached to him. Meanwhile the genuine Komitaji problem increases and if not wiped out will virtually reduce this Battalion to a siege-force holding a small part of a sub-area. Vasileias is the nerve-centre of Komitaji power, and if this and two villages protecting it are smashed others will fall away. I realise this might give handle to Ind Mac anti-Greek propaganda, but such trouble can probably be stalled off till after Noah's Ark. Tailpiece: Arrianos is in queer mood of excited depression. He believes AMM is deliberately keeping ELAS short of supplies and that his

14. The reference is to the IMRO movement, founded in 1893; see *Venture* 74.

15. See n. 5 above.



own difficulties due to lack of ammunition and arms, especially mortars, is a direct result of this'.

One result of the growing threat from the Komitaji was the decision of Evans, reported in the signal of 13 May: 'from now on we shall not live in villages' [but encamped 'in the woods', the Mission with the Andarte commandoes and Italian muleteers totalling 'about fifty' personnel']. On 19 May Evans reported his belief that HQ 9 Div was trying to transfer Arrianos and his unit elsewhere, and he asked Edmonds to dissuade the HQ in the interest of efficiency in Noah's Ark. 'He is a good commander in action, a personality and real leader, and his men look up to him and obey him'. Next day Evans reported, and gave his full support to, a proposal by Sergeant Kite. 'When attacks on Komitaji villages begin, this Battalion is to uncover Vasileias by wiping out Perikopi and Polykerasos in one operation. The next operation is for this Battalion to attack Vasileias, thus drawing Komitaji reinforcements out of Kastoria, which would then be attacked by 28 Regiment. I consider these two operations would settle the whole Komitaji problem'.

On the following day Evans reported that Arrianos and his Slav-speaking unit had left the area and were being replaced by a Greek-speaking unit, that Lytridhis had been ordered to attack Perikopi, and that he (Evans) would try to restrain him. 'It would help if you get HQ 9 Div to lay down policy on Komitaji villages'. However, Edmonds stated 'the policy is not to attack Komitaji villages at this stage, but to operate on the road between Florina and Koritsa without touching the Ark target there'. On 24 May Evans reported to Edmonds as follows: 'Asproyeia, now armed, completely dominates our target 5. Nymphaion is hostile and expected to arm soon, in which case Flambouron as well. Five more villages are likely to follow suit. My conclusion is that the armed village problem is now growing so fast that the destruction of Vasileias, Polykerasos and Perikopi is not enough. Prompt action is necessary; otherwise Ark this area will fail'. In a subsequent signal Evans named eleven armed villages and added that 'Hun and Bulgar trying to force more villages along L of C to take arms, including some on Florina plain'.

On 27 May Evans reported that Lytridhis was making continuous sporadic attacks on Komitaji villages and claimed to have disarmed the Komitaji of Sidherokhori completely. Meanwhile his own Andarte commandoes, Evans said, 'were going bad on us from inactivity'. On 29 May he reported a remark by Yannoulis that Arrianos' men were unreliable and wanted Independent Macedonia. 'I am convinced this is correct and so HQ 9 Div will not send Arrianos back here. Some Andartes from Slav village went over

to the Partisan Brigades which were passing through with Macdonald'.

The wireless station, now run by Leo Voller<sup>16</sup>, sent a constant stream of signals about enemy positions and troop movements, which were reported to Evans by his two agents in Florina. They revealed that a large-scale attack on the Albanian Partisans was being conducted by a German Mountain Division. On 31 May Evans, Kite, their commandoes and a supporting Greek-speaking platoon of ELAS laid an ambush on the Florina-Koritsa road. His subsequent signal to Edmonds was as follows.

'0555 hrs 31 May two sections of AMM Commandoes plus Kite and self plus one platoon ELAS Vitsi Bn at km 16 road Florina-Koritsa ambushed three staff cars of HQ 1 Mtn Div leading large column from Florina. Destroyed two cars, third temporarily useless, killed one Hun Staff Officer, two NCOs, our losses nil. Captured large amount documents including complete list of units composing 1 Mtn Div, also complete list of code names of these units coming into force 0000 hrs 1 June, also latest Hun pamphlets on R-mine and on decontamination of roads etc. Also large quantity admin documents and orders for formation of transport columns from local mules and drivers Florina and Koritsa. Also sack of personal mail, newspapers, etc. Also Hun ACIs and AOs. Have sent all above to Edmonds with suggestion most important stuff be sent out for scrutiny by you. We withdrew 0630 hrs, contacted soidisant Serb Partisans, actually Ind Macs of Prespa and reached our camp in Vitsi woods 2 June. Pse inform if and when documents received by you'.

These documents were of the greatest value, as Evans who read German realised. They gave the AMM warning of the large-scale drive which was about to descend on West Macedonia<sup>17</sup>. In the action itself according to Evans the Andarte commandoes performed well; the platoon of ELAS did not. A fougasse charge proved very effective<sup>18</sup>.

Another such ambush was planned at the request of Edmonds; but the Andarte commandoes and the supporting ELAS section, going in advance, were surprised in the village Dhendrokhori at 7 a. m. by a force of 50 Germans and 80 Komitaji, all from Kastoria. Ten Andartes were killed, including the only sentry who was wounded and then hanged by the Germans. The enemy force lost 3 men killed and took from the village 25 hostages. Another ambush

16. A Sergeant in the RAF, who had run my wireless station at Krimini and Pentalophos in West Macedonia with great efficiency.

17. See *DM* 89 f.

18. A full account of the action is given by Evans in his 'General Report' pp. 36-52, which is among his papers.

was laid on the night of 22-23 June in cooperation with ELAS; but no enemy column passed at the appropriate time.

A difficult situation had arisen with a group of Komitaji who had been chased and then surrounded by three ELAS Companies on Mali Madhi ("Mt Big" in Albanian) north of Dhendrokhori. Their commander, Peyo, had fled as a Communist to Bulgaria during the dictatorship of Metaxas, and he conducted propaganda for Independent Macedonia 'under Hun and Bulgar auspices, not under Tito and Tempo'. He and his Komitaji escaped from ELAS northwards and took refuge with the Yugoslav Partisans. On 30 June Evans and two officers of the British Mission in Yugoslavia met Lytridhes and Kotchko 'agitprop' (? politikos) of 1 Partisan Brigade, who had come 'at Tito's orders to confer with Lytridhis about Peyo Komitaji'. Evans did not hear the result of the conference.

The attacks of Vitsi ELAS on the Komitaji villages continued throughout June. For example, on 17 June twenty-two Komitaji were disarmed at Asproyeia. Some Komitaji villages were plundered, for instance on 29 June ELAS carrying off from Polykerasos 700 sheep, of which 10 were presented to AMM. On 16 June, in reply to a query from Evans, Edmonds stated 'cannot agree involve RSR [due later] in any form of civil war but only against Hun. Hope Andartes can fix this on their own'. On 8 July a firm directive was given by Cairo. 'Allied troops under command AMM in Greece will not take part in any ops other than those against Germans. In event restart civil strife between rival Greek political or guerrilla factions ALOs will ensure no accusations of favouritism to either side can be made by any organisation in Greece. Such troops will be removed any area in which Gk versus Gk ops are in progress and will safeguard AMM HQs, dropping-grounds and vital Mission area'. [This directive represented a weakening in the approach to the aggression of ELAS towards rival movements].

During July AMM HQ in West Macedonia and HQ 9 Div were disrupted by a powerful German drive. The AMM and ELAS of Vitsi lay low in expectation that they would also be overrun, but nothing eventuated. Evans and Kite completed the reconnaissance, begun by Major Scott, of targets in their area. ELAS continued to take no action against the Germans, preferring to shoot up the Komitaji villages. ELAS sabotage groups refused to enter Florina unless armed with Stens. On 28 July the RAF bombed targets in Florina, of which Evans' agents had supplied information. The railway station was out of action for more than a fortnight. Estimates of German and civilian casualties were not dependable.

During this long period (May to August) of almost complete non-activity by ELAS against the Germans large sums were being expended by AMM in the Vitsi area. Edmonds authorised the payment from April 1st of 630 sovereigns a month to the 550 Andartes [a number stated by Lytridhes and Arrianos but never checked] as 'a subsidy towards their maintenance'. Large numbers of mules, some fine horses for riding, and large quantities of wheat and maize were purchased with sovereigns through Evans from Albania and sent with Italian muleteers, who were also paid, to Pendalophos. They were needed especially for the transportation of supplies from the coast of Epirus to West Macedonia. On the other hand, there had been no payments to the people of burnt villages, because they were Komitaji villages, victims of what was indeed a form of civil war. Stagnation seemed to have set in as regards operations against the Germans in the Vitsi area. Evans had been under great stress. For as the only officer of AMM Vitsi he was generally required to be available at his wireless set to receive orders or make replies, returns and reports of intelligence information, whereas he needed also to confer with ELAS, handle discussions with the Partisans, reconnoitre targets and mount ambushes. On 29 July Evans signalled to Edmonds: 'personal discussion urgently required, can leave today for flying visit'. He left soon afterwards and stayed at Pendalophos until his return to the Vitsi area on 28 August. During his absence the very capable Sergeant Kite was in command. He had two compatriots (Sergeant Voller and Corporal Long), 6 Greeks, 2 Czechs and 2 Poles as Commandoes, 5 Italian muleteers and 1 AMM runner.

#### *4. Changes of Command, Komitaji villages and preparations for Noah's Ark*

While Evans was at Pendalophos during August, changes of command and of policy took place. Some explanation of them, although it does not occur in Evans' papers, is necessary in order to understand the final stages in the Vitsi area.

From the start until mid-August SOE Cairo acted as the GHQ of the BMM, which became the AMM. In practice it agreed with the policy which was recommended by the Commanding Officer in the mountains — in sequence Brigadier Eddie (Myers), Colonel Chris (Woodhouse) and myself as Lt.-Col. Eggs (Hammond). The situation was slightly complicated in that Chris was retained outside Greece from May to early October in 1944 but was still nominally Commander. I was the Acting Commander from May to August, was not in communication with Chris, and formulated my own policy

which was generally in line with what his had been. Since late January I had been the Senior Liaison Officer with ELAS GHQ and Commander of all Mission stations with ELAS north of the Corinthian Gulf. My knowledge of ELAS was unique. Two or three times a week I conferred with the three men who formed ELAS GHQ: Siantos, who was Secretary of the Greek Communist Party, Despotopoulos, who conducted diplomacy, and 'General' Sarafis, a retired regular Army Colonel, who had — originally under duress — accepted Command of ELAS<sup>19</sup>. All matters of policy were decided by Siantos as the mouthpiece of the Communist Party, EAM Central Committee and PEEA, the last of which we did not recognise. That policy was beyond doubt to those who had seen ELAS attack PAO, EDES, and EKKA and knew of the close liaison with the Secretaries of the Communist Parties of Albania and of Yugoslavia, namely Hoxha and Tito. It was to eliminate any rival guerrilla organisation (only EDES in Epirus and Anton Tsaous in East Macedonia were in the field in summer 1944), seize power on the heels of the German withdrawal, and set up PEEA in Athens as the official Government of Greece. For the implementation of that policy it was essential for ELAS to build up and conserve a large guerrilla army with a maximum of weapons and large reserves of foodstuffs and sovereigns.

In mid-August ELAS changed not its policy but its tactics, probably for the following reasons. PEEA, never strong in leading politicians, was isolated. A Russian Mission, attached not to Greek guerrilla organisations but to ELAS alone, was a disappointment; reaching ELAS GHQ in late July 1944, it had no means at all of arming and supplying ELAS, its currency was worthless in Greece, and it revealed the fact that the Russian army would not be able to reach Greece after the withdrawal of the Germans into Yugoslavia. The reputation of ELAS outside Greece was already dwindling, since a Government of National Unity had been formed and included representatives of EDES and EKKA. I pressed Siantos to disband PEEA and accept the offer of six offices in that Government. In mid-August he did so<sup>20</sup>. I warned SOE Cairo that this was a change of tactics only, and the aim of Siantos was still to eliminate his rivals in the mountains and to seize power in Greece<sup>21</sup>.

By mid-August preparations for Noah's Ark were well ahead. Small but well-armed groups of British and American troops, known respectively as RSR and OG, reached the Pindus range and were ready to be deployed.

19. For the circumstances see *Venture* 34 f.

20. For the Russian Mission and Siantos see *Venture* 160-7.

21. See my signal of 21 August to Cairo in *Venture* 163 and 197.

Small groups of selected ELAS Andartes had been trained to work with those troops; they were known as 'Closandartes'. Three RSR groups and 200 Closandartes were destined for West Macedonia. All targets there had been surveyed and demolition plans finalised. In order to free me for the direction of Noah's Ark, on 10 August I appointed Lt.-Col. Edmonds to take over from me as Liaison Officer with ELAS GHQ and Major Prentice to command in West Macedonia.

Shortly after mid-August Brigadier Barker-Benfield, a regular officer, arrived at my HQ. He announced that he was now Commander of the Greek Section of Cairo SOE. Using his superior rank, he acted as if he was Commander of AMM and interviewed ELAS GHQ himself. His policy was to trust ELAS totally to collaborate in Noah's Ark and to have no further or ulterior aims, and on that account to supply arms and ammunition to ELAS generously and not, as hitherto, strictly for operations against the Germans. He intended to conduct Noah's Ark centrally from Cairo, whereas I intended to delegate command to Area Commanders, such as Prentice in West Macedonia, who would in turn allow individual officers to use their discretion in making attacks or demolitions. During the conduct of Noah's Ark he intended to collaborate closely with 'General' Sarafis, whom he regarded as the effective Commander of ELAS and not, as I maintained, the cardboard figurehead. When all this became clear, I sent a signal to Cairo SOE expressing my disagreement with his policy. When it became apparent that his policy was to be the approved policy, I asked to be relieved of my command, because I was not the appropriate person to execute it. My request was accepted. Lt.-Col. Edmonds took over my duties, and I flew to Italy with the delegates of EAM-ELAS who were entering the Government of National Unity at the end of August.

The fact behind the change in British policy was that Greece passed from SOE to the War Office, because it was to be entered by regular British troops on the heels of the withdrawing Germans. The thinking of the War Office appeared to be that Myers, Woodhouse and I had misjudged the aims of ELAS, and that ELAS would behave as a faithful ally of Britain if only it was treated liberally. This change of policy had two results in West Macedonia. GHQ Middle East, disposing of more aircraft, sent more military personnel and more supplies of explosive and other material to AMM; and at the same time it sent to ELAS 9 Div large quantities of military and other supplies.

On the other hand, Prentice took a much firmer line with HQ 9 Div than Edmonds had done. He insisted on action rather than promises, and he trained further Andartes as 'Closandartes' to support the incoming RSR groups.

His attitude and its effects are seen in some signals after 10 August.

His Situation Report from AMM Pendalophos to AMM Vitsi area on 16 August ran thus: 'HQ 9 Div for some time has been concentrating troops south of here with briefs further operations against Zervas (EDES); hence their frequent lies to bear out [alleged] dispositions and strengths. Prentice has put relations on a new basis of frankness, saying we know all about this and promising limited support in forward areas only. Number of Andartes [to be] supported by us [will] increase later if justified by results in ops and continued frankness by ELAS. Lack of cooperation between RSR and AMM due to complete failure to plan in this area until recently. We wish especially know quality of Vitsi Andartes as shown in current Florina ops'. On 20 August Prentice signalled to Kite 'do ~~not~~ give any more money to ELAS without further orders from me; this primarily is result of atrocious beating-up of Epirotes [a Greek in AMM's employment] by EAM-ELAS, and secondarily to failure of ELAS to retain Noah's Ark troops in area'. He also asked for Kite's estimate of the Vitsi battalion of ELAS in clothing, discipline and aggressiveness, and whether its Company commanders were Greek-speaking or Slav-speaking.

The attack on Florina was made by ELAS alone on the night of 13 August. Enormous claims were investigated by Kite. He signalled to Prentice on 17 August. 'Florina attack claims greatly exaggerated by ELAS. Commandoes and guerrillas returned here last night and report as follows. Andartes were in Florina for a total of 3½ hours on night 13. Petrol and stores burnt, 33 Greek 'Gestapo' killed but few Huns, as these were in well-defended positions [a later claim was 20]. Reserve ELAS on Vitsi was mobilised for the attack. Total force used by ELAS was 600 including the Reserve ELAS'. The attack was said to have begun with the singing of the Independent Macedonia song, and Kite reported that the Serb Partisans lent Bren MGs to the Andartes for the attack. An agent in Florina said that the claim that EDES officers were forming Security Battalions in Florina 'has been swallowed and all cry anti-Zervas'<sup>22</sup>.

Earlier movements which had been reported were connected with this attack. On 15 August ELAS was reported 'to be conscripting Andartes in area, and 150 men from Laimos and 'Oxgermanos' [Ayios Germanos] are leaving today to join [these villages near the Yugoslav border]'. On 17

22. EAM maligned whichever organisation was its chief rival at the moment, whether EKKA, PAO or EDES. 'The Greek Gestapo' was EAM's phrase for the Greek Police of the Quisling Government.

August: 'Several men in Laimos refused to become Andartes but these were badly beaten up by ELAS. Yannoulis, the new commander of 28 Regiment, demanded from AMM sovereigns to pay merchants and submitted a list of ammunition, without which he declared ELAS could not undertake any further ops against the Huns'. On the other hand, ELAS was busily attacking the Komitaji villages with which the Germans were now ceasing to maintain contact. 'Vitsi Bn attacked Perikopi night 21. Five houses, two hay-stores burnt, 72 rifles, 3 MGs, mules, horses and food captured, also 73 prisoners, of whom 40 arrived in Vapsori when I [Kite] was there. All Reserve ELAS mobilised for these Komitaji ops, which are still proceeding'. At this time AMM stores, including explosives and medicines, were looted, and Kite made a complaint to ELAS.

On 2 September Prentice informed Evans that 'the reds yesterday occupied Siatista, Argos Orestikon and Kastoria and say they ambushed the withdrawing Huns'. The simultaneous withdrawal by the Germans from these three towns meant that the German route for the large-scale withdrawal was to be Kozani-Amyntaion-Vevi-Bitola (via the Monastir Gap), the last stage to be either through the plain or via Florina. The preliminary withdrawal left most of the armed villages stranded with no hope of German support. On the other hand, EAM-ELAS were now in full control of three important towns.

On 4 September Evans reported to Prentice: 'RSR section arrived today. Solon meeting second section at Khionaton ... 1 Sept Yannoulis rebels attacked Sklethron, ambushed Hun reinforcements from Kastoria, burning 4 trucks, 7 Huns killed, 1 MMG, quantity amm and clothes captured. 3 Sept rebels entered Kastoria, destroyed 30 trucks from there near Klisoura. Above infm from Yannoulis'. On 4 and 5 September Yannoulis himself reported as follows to Evans:

'I am at Sklethron. I inform you villages Vasileias, Varyko, Lithia, Verga, Stavropotamos, Asproyeia, Sklethron and their (? instigator) Aetos have been disarmed. The criminals fled from these villages and others were drawn away after them'. 'I inform you that the Komitaji centre of resistance exists no more. We disarmed 100 men from Aetos. The Germans disarmed the remaining 130. New dispositions. 2 Coys with 3 MGs in Flambouron-Klidhi -Vevi. Keravnos Coy stays put. Coy of Gotsi road Florina-Albania to work with Keravnos and with RSR when asked — base Mavrokhori. 1 Coy at Klisura—(? Dasym) and will be in comm with Ypsilantis. 1 Coy Ephedria [Reserve ELAS] at Koryphe'. [From the disarmed villages ELAS had taken large quantities of weapons, ammunition, animals and foodstuffs. What ELAS did with the 'prisoners'



is not mentioned in the papers]<sup>23</sup>.

Prentice sent John Collins, an ALO, to be 'a kind of Town Major' at Kastoria. This town and any others which the Germans left were now controlled by EAM. On October 16, when the Red Cross tried to obtain relief for people in Kastoria, it found EA already in operation.

### *5. Smashem and surrender directed from Cairo*

The order 'Smashem' to commence Noah's Ark on September 8th came from Cairo to Prentice and was relayed to Evans on the 5th. [The order and the following plan emanated from Cairo, i.e. presumably from Brigadier Barker-Benfield, not from Edmonds, and it had been formed in collaboration with GHQ ELAS]. On 8 Sept. ELAS was to attack Kozani with 2 Battalions from Siniatsikon and 3 Battalions from Bourinos, while the Vitsi Regiment was to attack Klidhi and to ambush the road north of Amyntaion. On 8 September AMM forces and RSR were to attack some Kozani, others a garrisoned town 'perhaps Naoussa', others the railway, while the Vitsi AMM and RSR were to demolish the railway line and lay ambush on the road near Klidhi in collaboration with Vitsi ELAS. Prentice added his own comment on this order. 'Emphasise all above is ideal and much probably not possible in the time; but do something on the above lines and remember as many ops as poss in the next few days'.

A report from Collins of RSR actions in the Klidhi area via Cairo to Prentice ran thus: 'Line blown morning 8th as reported. In spite of full plan made with ELAS no troops turned up to support op, which was entirely carried out by Commandoes. Night 8 Sept. plan made with ELAS to destroy road Vevi-Kelli with support of one Company but only 20 men turned up, so op cancelled. Mines laid outside Vevi destroyed two vehicles. Night 12 Sept. road in pass blown with support of only 12 Andartes, although full platoon promised. ELAS ops: 7 Sept. destroyed lengths of rail and one engine; road repaired by Huns at once. 8 Sept. attacked small post and then retired; des-

23. In his 'General Report' (n. 18 above) Evans listed three atrocities on information from eyewitnesses or/and participants, which he believed to be true. (1) A wounded ELAS Andarte was killed with an axe by a Komitaji of Dhendrokhori on 17 June 1944. (2) Some 25 captured Komitaji were massacred by 1 Bn 28 Regt in May or June 1944 near Vapsori. (3) Komitaji captured at Polykerasos and at Perikopi — '120, I think, but this is from memory only' — were massacred by 1 Bn 28 Regt in August 1944 on the order of Yannoulis.

troyed small unguarded bridge near Xyno Nero. 9 Sept. a tank shelled heights near Klidhi, many Andartes retired, train brought into the pass. 10 Sept. all Andartes retired towards Flambouron but returned next day. 11 and 12 no action. 13 Sept. road Vevi-Kelli blown by Andartes but repaired at once by Germans. 14 Sept. 100 Germans without tanks or artillery captured heights and Andartes retired in spite of excellent position. Road was repaired by Germans as the Andartes were no longer covering it, 15 Sept. 50 carts 70 vehicles went through the pass with no opposition from Andartes. In spite of ELAS statement that there are 3 Companies in the north of the pass I have never seen more than 40 men and 2 officers. All ELAS demolitions were carried out with explosives stolen from AMM, while Mission Commanders were greatly hindered in task through lack of explosives. ELAS also claim destruction of one Light Tank (probably on our mines), one car and bridge near Vevi but cannot be confirmed. In spite of repeated assurances from ELAS command that they would capture Hun posts in the pass no serious attempt was made to do so. Commandoes now withdrawn from area and going Boupfi'.

Kite operated with his commandoes trained in demolition [Poles, Czechs and Closandartes] at this time as follows: 'Sept. 5 Lekhovo [road-]bridge blown. Sept. 7/8 at Klidhi 300 metres line destroyed and 3 delayed charges laid, and road in Klidhi pass mined. Sept. 8/9 road Vevi-Florina mined and one vehicle destroyed. 12/13 road blown in Klidhi pass. Evans blew the road at Pisoderi on 8 Sept. Robby's RSR section blew road at 4970 on 8 Sept.; blew bridge on Albanian frontier on 10 Sept.; mortared Krystallopiyi guard-post no casualties on 12 Sept.; and 18 Sept. shot up Vatokhori bridge guard, one or more Huns killed. Alan's RSR section attacked the guard-post at kilo 15, sentry gave warning but 2 Huns killed, one wounded on 13 Sept.; and shot up Vigla guard-post on 14 Sept. Both RSR sections when not otherwise engaged have been covering Florina-Albania road with LMGs. Evans reported to Prentice on 21 Sept. 'Attacks on a defended position needed an assault force which we have not got, since RSR confined to support role. Robby finds Closandartes will not go in. Yannoulis' troops run away, see my letter. Only hope is Keravnos who may be better'.

In answer to a query by Prentice Evans confirmed that Yannoulis' claims for ELAS actions in Smashem were mainly adoptions of RSR and Kite actions in the Klidhi area. On 19 Sept. he sent a signal to Cairo: 'Gen sit. Andartes fighting little, if at all, and deceiving us as to strength, locations, ammunition. Do not think anything will induce them to fight. Only hope continue Smashem if OGp should arrive sooner for cooperation with RSR and we should have

plenty of explosives to do large-scale demolitions, which do not have to be held by fire to block routes ... RSR at moment harassing guard-posts on road Florina-Koritsa'.

[The Cairo plan failed because it depended for success on ELAS units making assaults in full strength against strongly held towns and guard-posts. ELAS failed completely to carry out their side of the plan. In consequence, no town or guard-post was captured in the entire Vitsi area. The Commander of an ELAS Company was reported to say of the guard-posts on the Florina-Albania road 'We could take these posts in half-an-hour. HQ does not permit us. We have orders to incur no losses, and we must kill 200 Huns for every Andarte killed'. There is no doubt about the truth of the first part of his remark. The RSR sections, having been strictly ordered only to support ELAS assaults in strength, were reduced to making single demolitions and shooting up guard-posts. Kite and Evans carried out the operations for which they and their Commandoes had been trained on the spot.]

[The plan had been hatched and timed in Cairo. It seems to have assumed that throughout occupied Greece there would be considerable movement of enemy troops on the railway and the roads which were to be mined, ambushed and 'covered' from the start of Smashem. In fact there was almost no movement on rail and road during this week in West Macedonia, and in consequence there was very little disruption of communications and few enemy casualties. Secondly, it was obvious that Cairo GHQ had failed to realise that ELAS would never act in strength against German troops, and that guerrilla operations, being opportunist by nature, had to be mounted not from a high command in Cairo but by commanders, even junior commanders, on the spot, who could lead their men<sup>24</sup>. Finally, the weather in this Smashem week was wet, cold and misty, and it caused sickness and malaria among RSR and Commandoes waiting day and night on bleak mountainsides.]

Because Cairo GHQ expected ELAS with the support of RSR and AMM to capture towns and guard-posts, a directive was issued by Cairo to AMM stations on the subject of surrender. On 6 Sept. Evans received the following from Cairo via Pendalophos. 'To all areas. Orders re surrender of Huns. No surrender to be accepted by ALOs except in case of Div or larger. Surrender of all Hun forces in Greece ideal and for them to remain *in situ* with arms and equipment feeding themselves and await arrival of Allied Forces. Comply following orders. 1. Report full efforts surrender. 2. Do not accept surrender

24. As stated in my signal of 21 August in *Venture* 195 f.

less than complete. 3. Make no promise, guarantee or comment. 4. Only state you will refer higher authority; instructions in each case will be sent from here. 5. Attempt stop small parties surrendering themselves. Do not wish their arms obtained by guerrillas. All cases retain their arms until taken custody Allied Forces or further instructions received. All non-Huns such as Poles, French, Russians, Czechs treated as Hun. Noah's Ark your first task. Until ordered do not detain OG or RSR for guarding enemy equipment or PoWs'.

This directive was replaced by another from Cairo, sent on from Pendarlophos to Evans on 21 Sept.: 'Directive of 6 Sept. now cancelled by new Cairo instrs. 1. Do not encourage small individual Hun detachments to surrender but do not prevent them offering. 2. Persuade Huns surrender to us rather than to Andartes. Point out we have no guarantee and accept no responsibility regarding treatment by Andartes. 3. Report every approach for surrender made by Hun. [Comment by Prentice follows: Above is vague and not very binding, particularly one. So carry on as before']. On the same day Evans relayed to Cairo the information from agents in Florina: 'Huns in Florina say to local people "we will surrender to Russians or British but not to Andartes"'. [Not unreasonably, since Germans had hung captured Andartes in the past and Andartes had executed captured Germans].

A particular negotiation was described in the following signal: '24 Sept. Christo, the Div politikos probably known to Prentice, had talk lasting 5 hrs with the guard-post at kilo 15. Alan [RSR Officer] was nearby, so attended talk. Huns said would surrender to British but not to ELAS. Alan told the politikos that he as a British officer would have no authority to hand over bodies and arms to ELAS. At 2200 hrs he left one Hun in tears, others nearly and saying "goot English". Politikos claimed all bodies and arms left would belong to ELAS. Comment [by Evans] can get most posts to surrender but only to be British PoW, not ELAS. Can proceed only if this formally agreed by Div'.

On 28 September Prentice advised Evans on the subject as follows: '1. Cairo policy against surrender small Hun groups, but owing possibility rebels close and hold road following surrender have requested Cairo permission proceed this case. 2. Have requested from Cairo. Mortlake [should obtain] order from ELAS GHQ to 9 Div stating [that the] disposal of PoWs and arms [is a] matter for decision by Supreme Command and weapons not automatically ELAS property'. He continued as follows: 'Div appear willing play but will require order. Pending reply Cairo on 1 above do not continue surrender talks. Meanwhile, pending answer on 2, try get Yannoulis to concentrate PoWs and deserters with their arms, and self trying get immediate order from

Div this effect. Probably some bodies and arms will slip through now in which case do not worry. Hope matter settles in a few days. Agree Kastoria temporary concentration point, and if Yannoulis agrees with this concentration send PoWs there now. Meanwhile Macki had talks surrender 25 Sept. with officers representing OC Northern Greece. Colonel unable to be present owing to a train ambush, so talks postponed. This looks like real thing, so going Vermion immediately with Peter'. On 5 October Evans informed Prentice 'Hope surrender all Hun forces [in Florina] be arranged'.

While negotiations on the British side were halted or aborted (as happened on Vermion and in Florina), Cairo issued yet another directive which reached Evans on 30 September via Pentalophos, where Prentice added 'further additional blurb from Cairo': 'Hun surrender. 1. Make Hun aware your presence sole channel negotiations, ~~as~~ prior instructions. 2. Only discuss surrender with Senior Officer in command. When Hun approach made, report fully when unit prepared to surrender. Cairo will instruct. Method to be settled between Hun envoy and ALO after instructions from Cairo. Make sure understood terms now not unconditional and may be altered'. Considerable delays in signal traffic did not help. On 6 October Evans summarised the difficulties in a signal to Cairo:

'Ref. desertions, surrenders, all guard-posts, and other small Hun detachments. Success not possible if every case has to be referred to you for instructions. During delay between first approach and receipt of instructions guard-post may be strengthened or replaced. Most guard-posts will give in, but many contain one or two individuals who would give show away if given chance. Please give us blank cheque proceed, or else tell us to leave small detachments entirely alone and concentrate on getting formal surrender of all their troops this area. Your instructions to Pentalophos refers. Believe ELAS will play ball about arms and equipment'.

On 8 October Cairo issued a new directive. 'All negs for surrender German army North Greece will be made in conjunction with local ELAS 9 Div and ELAS GHQ. Sarafis has been authorised to accept surrender of Germans all ELAS areas. Negs for major surrender must be referred phase by phase to Cairo for information and decision by Force 140. Following suggested line for you for major surrender to include: "If British orders to surrender are faithfully carried out, all German commanders and troops in North Greece will have opportunity to surrender direct to British and their safety will be responsibility of British forces when they arrive ... German troops will concentrate in suitable areas decided by Sarafis possibly west of Salonica. You [Prentice] will be British plenipotentiary on the spot but negs should always



be referred to Sarafis, who should if possible take part'. A note was added at Pentalophos by Wickstead. 'Both Sarafis and Zervas come under General Scobie Force 140, and it looks as though, in return for toeing the line, they are to be allowed to ride the big white horse'.

[Remote control from Cairo and time-consuming intercommunications between Cairo and the local AMM W/T station, which was usually at a day's distance or more from the scene of any proposed surrender, made it almost impossible for the officer on the spot to conclude any agreement with would-be surrenderers. Four separate directives between 6 Sept. and 8 October caused confusion and delay. The first three directives did not advise on the problem of being associated with ELAS on the spot of any would-be surrender. Under the fourth directive the officer on the spot had to negotiate both with Cairo and with Sarafis, presumably through Cairo or through AMM GHQ, before he could reply to the would-be surrenderers. The idea that Sarafis could be present at negotiations, e.g. on Vermion, was unrealistic, since his GHQ was far back in South Pindus and a journey of days on horseback or on foot would be needed to bring him to the scene of action. It is not surprising that no considerable surrenders occurred in West Macedonia, and that the great majority of deserters with their arms fell into the hands of ELAS, as Evans foresaw in a signal of 29 Sept. commenting on Cairo's third directive. 'Will carry out Part 2, but can guarantee Andartes will take all arms and equipment of all prisoners'].

#### *6. The rest of Noah's Ark and the Independent Macedonia movement*

GHQ Cairo sent out a report to all stations; it reached Evans via Prentice on 26 Sept.: 'Ark results excellent. Hun withdrawal hampered very seriously. Using sea but shipping attacked successfully. Unable give time limit Ark, hope obtain more sorties. As there will be work after Ark do not risk collapse Mission but try continue utmost endurance', to which Prentice added 'do not know if work after Ark implies night clubs Florina or staying AML'.

From the third week in September when German troops began to withdraw towards Yugoslavia there was a continuous flow of signals from Evans HQ, reporting the strength of enemy garrisons, the traffic on the railways to Florina from Arnisia and from Kozani and from Florina to Bitola, and the movements of enemy columns along the main roads which converged near Florina on the way to the Monastir Gap and Bitola, namely from Koritsa in Albania, Kozani in the south, and Arnisia in the east. One officer had always

to be with the wireless-set, as Evans reported on 6 October. 'Chandler or other officer has to remain at HQ for the following reasons. 1. Heavy signals traffic. 2. Continual supplies and information to be sent to the three RSR sections, Closandartes and Kite's Commandoes. 3. Sifting copious but inaccurate information. 4. Interrogation and disposal of deserters of whom the number is expected to increase'. Evans himself was kept busy also as linguist in German, French and Greek.

Vitsi ELAS continued to stay on the defensive, as ordered by ELAS GHQ, and did not deploy its reputed 550 well-armed Andartes against the Germans. As Evans signalled on 6 October, 'rebel tactics are "safety first", and the only way to delay the Huns is a continuous series of demolitions'. On 16 October, for instance, Evans received a letter from Captain Tozer, an ALO with an RSR section at Krateron. 'I have not seen or heard of Ptolemaios/Keravnos [commanding an ELAS Company] since they delivered their ultimatum on the 12th. Except for our own [Closandartes], there is not one Andarte to be seen in the area, and to my knowledge there are no Andartes on our stretch of the Albania-Florina road'. In order to press ELAS Evans asked Cairo on 15 October 'to send no more ammunition for the Andartes'. At that time the Battalion of Gotchi mutinied, and Vitsi ELAS sent some of its forces against him (see below). The attitude of ELAS was in contrast to that of EDES. On 17 October Ioannina was liberated, and agents in Florina reported strong attacks by 'EDES and the English' on the withdrawing Germans, even as far as Erseke in Albania<sup>25</sup>.

A continuous series of demolitions was maintained by the British forces-AMM, RSR and after 6 October a sapper section of LRDG. Kite and his Commandoes (Poles, Czechs and Greeks) kept up their amazing record: '19 Sept. blew the road between Boupfi and Ano Kleinai and destroyed three bridges. 19/20 [i.e. that night] destroyed 300 m of railway track and laid three delay-charges at Papayannis. 21/22 laid mines on road Florina-Monastir; one vehicle destroyed. 24/25 blew culvert on road Vigla-Florina; two vehicles destroyed. 25/26 culvert blown on road Vigla-Florina, as Huns repaired previous blow in a half-day; and went to Vigla guard-post with Lt. Chalkley to arrange surrender but we would not accept. 27/28 300 m of railway line destroyed and three delay-charges laid at Papayannis. 28/29 went with RSR to heights over Vigla to ambush Hun column but mist was too low. 30 tried to blow the road Vigla-Florina but Hun guard-post prevented this. Oct. 1/2

25. Woodhouse described EDES as 'coming up to expectations which were high' in September and October (*Apple* 78).



moved to Krateron as Hun drive reported. 2 returned to Boupfi. 4/5 blew culvert on road Vigla-Florina with RSR in support. 6 left Boupfi for Krateron owing to Hun shelling. 7/8 railway bridge prepared for blow, 200 m. railway line destroyed. Result: one engine, one carriage and the bridge destroyed on 8th, train falling into gully, 6 Huns killed, 5 captured. RSR in support. Road Florina-Monastir was mined and one vehicle destroyed. 9 met LRDG officers. 10 Huns repairing culvert blown on 4/5 were shot up by Commandoes and RSR. 11/12 blew culvert at Vigla-Florina road and mines laid on the road; and Huns were shot up with RSR support. The next four days were spent in making plan for a combined op by LRDG, RSR and AMM. 17/18 destroyed 300 m. railway line and laid 3 delay-charges at Greek-Yugoslav border; laid mines on the Florina-Bitola road with RSR support. One vehicle destroyed. 19 Moved to the heights over a culvert on the Vigla-Florina road for a combined operation, but op postponed that evening for 24 hours. 20 Ditto. 21/22 Blew culvert on Vigla-Florina road; combined LRDG, RSR, Commandoes, RAF op. 26 Reconnaissance on the plain. Explosives awaited. 28 Left to attack railway but cancelled at the last moment — no guides at the rendezvous. 31/1 Nov. blew road Florina-Proti with RSR support. 1 Nov. present at Florina gun-duel and entered the town at 17.44 GMT'. Evans added notes on the lack of ELAS Andarte support, the effect of the bad weather on the operations, as well as on the personnel, and 'the consistently outstanding work by Sergeant Kite'.

The RSR sections were posted as follows on 30 September. 'Lambhead and section at Ayios Athanasios with task ambushes on Florina-Edessa (via Arnissa) road. Robinson and section in Trivouno area watching the Koritsa-Florina road. Chalkley and section at Boupfi with the task of watching the Florina-Koritsa road'. Since the RSR were under a separate command, they figured seldom in the AMM signals, but there is a note on some activities by them among Evans' papers. We may cite those of Robinson's section. '7/8 Sept. road blown near Little Vigla. 9 move to Gavros and recced Vatokhori guard-post at bridge. 11-12 ambush positions on road. 12/13 harassed guard-post Krystallopiyi. 14 section still in ambush position. Recced Krystallopiyi guard-post; negative attack by Andartes and Albanian partisans. 15 move to Gavros. 16 recced Vatokhori bridge guard-post, Huns improving defences. 17 positions taken for that guard-post. 17-19 harassing guard-post. 20-27 guard-post continually harassed, and no sentry on the bridge day or night. No movement on the road. Not allowed to attack the guard-post or ask for surrender. 3 deserters arrived from the village. Section living out all the time in bad weather. 27 a column of 1500 started passing, but Huns had taken over

the section's positions and had taken thorough defensive precautions for their move. 29/30 move to Boupfi'.

The activities of another RSR section were as follows: '17 Sept. two sections and AMM to blow railway south of the Yugoslav border and mine the road. Held up by huge, continuous Hun column. Rob, Alan, Kite and Gerald watched from 30 yards while the Huns mended a puncture. 20 negative ambush due to insufficient liaison beforehand. 21 joint blow, results 2 trucks destroyed by blow, 3 fired by RAF, 18 damaged, 80 Huns wounded, killed unknown. 24 Rob section to Florina-Bitola road with four mines. Negative. 25 section ambushed a column which included cyclists; 4 Huns casualties. 27 General staff car destroyed and 3 officers killed by mine laid 21 Sept. 4/5 Oct. Florina-Koritza road blown and ambush laid by both sections. 5 twenty Huns ambushed when inspecting blow, but one Andarte spoilt the show [firing too soon]. 6/7 Rob section and AMM on 26-mile walk to the Florina-Bitola railway. 7/8 bridge collapsed (see Kite's report). Constant guard kept on Florina-Koritza road. 10 saw thirty Huns trying to repair the blow of 4/5 as two trucks had gone off the road. Eight HMGs fired on them. Results not known. 11 gave protection to Kite blowing road. Shoot at three trucks. Heavily mortared and machine-gunned'.

The first group of British troops of General Scobie's Force 140 landed at Patras on the night of 3/4 October and proceeded on the trail of the withdrawing Germans, whose demolitions impeded progress. On 27 October Prentice informed Evans as follows: 'One British officer recceing route in your area, probably followed by CO. Siatista-Argos-Xyno Nero-Flambouron reported clear for Jeeps. ... Patforce now in position in the area of Kozani'. It was at Kozani that Force 140 fought its first action against the Germans<sup>26</sup> and later pursued them to the Monastir Gap, where Tito refused the offer of help and kept Force 140 out of Yugoslavia. On 4 November a message was passed via Evans HQ to the commander, Colonel Jellicoe: '1. ELAS is being instructed through Force 133 [AMM] not to attack the Security Battalions unless ordered by you. 2. Am trying to get a Government representative to Grevena but ETA probably not before 2 November, weather permitting'. By this time AMM Vitsi was under the command of Force 140.

For the last part of Noah's Ark Vitsi ELAS had been distracted by a mutiny of which the leader was a Slav-speaking native of Melas, called Gotchi, who had joined ELAS in winter 1942/43 'with *soidisant* left-wing views'. Evans

26. See *DM* 253 f.

described him as having won an excellent reputation as a fighter against the Germans and as being used by EAM-ELAS to win other Slavophone Greeks for their cause. In summer 1944 he raised 2 Bn 28 Regt mainly from the area Dhendrokhori, Koryphe, Alonas and Ayios Germanos, i.e. from Slavophone Greeks, and when he became its commander the Battalion distinguished itself in an action against the Germans according to a signal of 9 September. On 10 October Prentice signalled to Evans: 'I learnt today that 2nd Bn 28 Rgt is in revolt. In my opinion revolt is usual timely Hun propaganda to protect his roads this frantic moment ... we must not be involved. Do not give more stores to this Bn. HQ 9 Div asks us to withdraw any ALO if with this Bn. Karatzas and Lokaris [the chief political leaders of 9 Div] arriving Flambouron tomorrow'. Next day 3 Bn 28 Regt informed Evans that 'units of ELAS went on 11 Oct. to disarm the Gotchi Bn which mutinied'<sup>27</sup>. So on 12 October Evans reported to Prentice as follows: 'Revolt of 2nd Bn 28 Regt, also one Company of 1 Bn 28 Regt, arose from the order of Yannoulis that 2nd Bn should go to Vermion. Macs wanted to fight only in their own locality. No evidence of Hun propaganda. ELAS sending two Companies to disarm the Bn. No ALO with Bn, and stores are always given to Yannoulis. I shall reach Flambouron tomorrow'. [It may be recalled that the Battalion of Slav-speaking Macedonian Greeks commanded by Arrianos had been moved with him to Vermion and not sent back to Vitsi, although Evans asked HQ 9 Div to return it to the Vitsi area].

On 17 October Evans sent to Cairo a signal about the dispositions of ELAS forces: 'They are temporarily confused owing to the sudden eruption of the Independent Macedonia tendency in 2nd Bn 28 Regt in area Koryphe to Prespa. Am keeping Prentice fully informed about this mutiny and ELAS measures against it. Serious trouble may result but do not think so. But unless the Greek National Government has firm, consistent, liberal policy for Slav-speaking minority in Greece the problem will be a running sore after the war. Will send ELAS dispositions when they crystallise, and meanwhile am trying to make them concentrate on Huns in whom they are not so interested'. On 24 October Evans noted '1 Bn 27 Regt and Amyntas will send 2 Companies to Prespa to fight Gotchi (this includes Paleologos)'<sup>28</sup>.

In a signal of 14 November to Pomforce [part of Scobie's army] Evans stated that after mutinying 'Gotchi went to Ayios Germanos with the whole

27. See *DM* 219 and the note by P. I. Papathanasiou.

28. Evans gave the dispositions of Vitsi ELAS units on 24 October in a signal which is among his papers, in 'Blocco per Appunti'.

Battalion and also many villagers, some taken by force, some carried away by enthusiasm. After the German withdrawal Gotchi and his force moved to Bitola and the area south of it towards the Greek frontier. He has excellent relations with the "Serb" Partisans in the area Bitola-Ochrid-Prespa, who are in fact Macedonians ready to fight to set up a Free Macedonia. Gotchi's movement would not by itself be more than an abortive revolt by the peasants of a small area, but with the support of Macedonian Partisans in the area of Bitola, some of whose leaders are intelligent and educated men, it will probably take serious proportions. These Partisans are those who were and as far as I know still are under the command of Tempo [Tito's second-in-command]. From reliable sources the situation in Bitola is the following. Most of the population say "We have been liberated from Huns but who will liberate us from Partisans? We want British troops here". Partisans are conducting propaganda and minor terrorism in favour of Independent Macedonia and victimising the Greek minority and all who have British or American sympathies. Also talking wildly about marching on Florina and Salonika, but I do not know if they will mount an organised offensive. The supreme power in all matters in Bitola is the Communist Party more or less camouflaged. The Macedonian flag, namely gold star on red ground, flies everywhere in town'.

'The situation in Florina from my own observation is as follows. (1) Most of the population is anxiously waiting for British troops to arrive and Greek Government to take over civil administration. (2) Everything at present is run directly or indirectly by the Communist Party who have cowed the population by orders not to fraternise with the British. Proportion of genuine Communists here is small but very well organised. (3) There are strong indications that the Communist Party is secretly cooperating with Gotchi and allowing his agents to enter Florina in civilian clothes, but I am not sure of this. (4) The Party is trying to levy 1500 sovs from the people of Florina. (5) Passes for travellers Florina-Bitola are issued only by the Party. (6) ELAS 27 and 28 Regts are stationed at Florina and Armenokhori with advanced elements near the frontier. (7) It is rumoured that ELAS will give up its arms by 10 December as the initial move towards the formation of a National Army, but I know that leading Communists here have denied this. ELAS have a quantity of arms and ammunition hidden in the mountains, also a large quantity of food abandoned here by Germans. (8) Most villages in this area are almost pure Slav and would probably support Gotchi, if occasion were to arise. Many villagers are proud to call themselves "Macedonians, not Greeks". (9) Morale of the Florina population is low. General gloom. ELAS is frightened by Gotchi and appears ripe to split up into various political components,

but it is still held together by its Red nucleus. The Greek section of the population would normally rise as one man to meet the Slav threat but is disunited, because the only available leadership is offered by ELAS, which is still powerful but not popular except with Communists. The most obvious need is for centre or right to provide some sort of leadership, which so far they have completely failed to do. The Slav population distrusts ELAS and also the prospect of a Greek Government and everything Greek, but it is not yet openly demonstrating in favour of Gotchi or Tempo's Macedonians. Slavs are, as usual, wary of committing themselves'.

'My comments: (1) The presence of British troops here is highly desirable and would in itself diminish the Communist hold on the population. Strength one Company or more. Not Indian troops, as this would offend all sections of the population. We know that they are fine troops, but Greeks would think them merely "black men" and would regard them as an insult. (2) It is essential that the Greek Government send representatives and undertake civil administration. (3) This would be an initial step towards unity in this area, and then the Slav threat would be a good not a bad thing, as it would help to unite the Greeks not only in Macedonia but everywhere, as it would cause them temporarily to abandon squabbles of Greek versus Greek. (4) BMA currency or preferably the new drachma is badly needed here'.

After leaving Greece Evans wrote a General Report, which summarised much that is here narrated in detail with the original signals. He made in it some general comments on the ELAS forces in the Vitsi area and their activities in three periods in 1944 as follows:

'March-May. The ELAS unit was the 'Vitsi Detachment of 9 Div', a slightly under-strength battalion raised during winter 1943/44 by Arrianos from the villages of the Vitsi area and coming directly under command of 9 Div. The positions of its Companies and of the platoons which the Companies used to put out on detachment duties varied considerably, but the basic plan was always to occupy a ring of villages surrounding Vapsori, the natural centre of the area.

'Arrianos' battalion was remarkable in that it was one of the few ELAS units which lived up to the heroic description tacked on to the Andartes by the Allied press and propaganda. That is, it really was a battalion drawn from the people through and through, including its officers, and as keen on fighting the foreign oppressor as the indigenous oppressor, i.e. anyone whom EAM did not like. Arrianos' Company Commanders were good stout fighters, whose men would follow and obey them in difficult situations. They all showed a genuine decency and warmth of feeling towards us which the *politikós* could

never counterfeit. They were thoroughly Left-wing, yet they never showed any hesitation in co-operating with "the reactionary, plutocratic British". I have very warm memories of these people, as I have of Arrianos. Both he and they, though they were no angels and had certainly murdered a few political opponents, had something cordial and genuine about them which is one of several good things which the Left-wing movement in Greece represents.

May-August. The Vitsi Detachment was replaced by I Battalion 28 Regiment of ELAS, which also for a while was known as the Vitsi Detachment. This Battalion's positions were always designed with a view to fighting the Komitajis rather than carrying out defensive and offensive operations against the Germans. Thus the main areas occupied came to be the ridges overlooking the road Amyntaion-Kastoria from the north, and Dhendrokhori-Ieropyi. This Battalion also made a point of having a platoon in the area of Prespa to maintain Greek national influence and EAM political influence among the villagers there, who showed an occasional tendency to listen to the Komitajis and a marked tendency to veer towards Independent Macedonia, both that of Tito-Tempo-Deyan and that of Peyo-Gotchi. Arrianos had been very keen to maintain Greek influence but had had to tread warily because most of his own Andartes were Slavs in speech. I Battalion consisted mostly of Greek-speaking Greeks, and its Commander and its Kapetanios, Lytridhis and Yannoulis, had no trammel upon them. Their orders to Company Commanders, whenever Company positions changed, used to include the phrase "to prevent the advance of any enemy whatsoever, whether Germans, local reactionaries, Bulgars, Komitajis, or autonomists". It was during this summer that Gotchi, a villager of Melas, raised the Slav-speaking Battalion which came to be known as II Battalion 28 Regt. It mutinied in October.

September. Command of I Battalion 28 Regt was taken over by Lt. Tsamis, I rather surmise because he was first and foremost a soldier and had, as far as I know, no particular political affiliations.

I Battalion had a straightforward military role in Noah's Ark, which it did not fulfil, but this was no fault of the excellent leadership of Tsamis or of the devotion and endurance of the Andartes. It was the fault of the ELAS system and direction generally, in this case entrusted to Yannoulis, who after Lytridhis' departure stayed on as Kapetanios of I Battalion and Liaison Officer with the AMM both for that Battalion and for 28 Regt.

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