

THE OPPONENTS' FORCES AT THE START OF THE WAR

In the first critical days, until the check of the Italians' attack (battle of Elaia, Kalpaki, Kalamas, 2-8 Nov. 1940), the completion of conscription and the Greek counterattack.

Italian forces:

High Military Command: Commander general Visconti Prasca. Epirus theatre of operations

XXV Army Corps: Commander general Carlo Rossi -Four divisions(23rd: "Ferrara", 51st: "Siena", 131st armoured "Centauri" and a cavalry division) Total strength: approximately 42,000 men

XXVI Army Corps: Commander general Gabrielle Nasti -Four divisions (49th: "Parma", 29th: "Piemonte", 19th: "Venezia", 53rd: "Arezzo")

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Total strength: approximately 44,000 men

Between the two army corps, in the Pindos sector: 3rd Alpine Division ("Giulia")

Total strength: 59 infantry battalions, 135 batteries (23 heavy), 150 battle tanks, 18 cavalry troops, 6 mortar battalions and one machine gun battalion

Greek strength:

Epirus operations theatre:

VIII Infantry Division: Commander major general C. Katsimetros and the headquarters of the III infantry brigade commanded by infantry colonel Demetrius Yatzis

In total it included: 4 infantry regiment commands, 15 infantry battalions, 16 batteries, 5 escort artillery platoons, 2 mobile machine gun battalions, one heavy machine-gun battery, one divisional reconnaissance unit. The 39th Evzon (light Greek infantry) regiment of the III division (moving from Aetoloakarnania towards Epirus).

On the 12th of October 1940: Major general N. Lioumpas, who was given the command of the Thesprotia sector, was placed at the disposal of the division.

One antiaircraft battery (3 canons), which was dedicated to the protection of Ioannina, arrived. The division commands were completed as follows: Division infantry commander: Colonel George Dres - 4th infantry regiment commander: Colonel C. Papadopoulos - 40th Evzon regiment commander: Colonel Thr. Tsakalotos

On the 27th of October 1940, the division had completed its conscription.

Western Macedonia operations theatre:

Western Macedonia Army Section (WMAS: Commander lieutenant general John Pitsikas (base Kozani)

B' Army Corps: commander major general Demetrios Papadopoulos, I division, commander major general Demetrios Vrachnos, IX division, commander major general Christos Zygouris, V infantry brigade and commander infantry colonel Anastasios Kalis, IX border sector

C' Army Corps: Commander lieutenant general George Tsolakoglu (base Thessaloniki), X division, commander major general Christos Kitsos, XI division, commander artillery colonel George Costalos, IV infantry brigade and commander major general Agamemnon Metaxas, IX, X, XI border sectors

Pindos Detachment:

Commander, the reserve from career, colonel Constantine Davakis (Eptahori) Responsibility sector between the right of the VIII division and the left of the IX division (deployment ZE 37 km. approximately) It included: The 51st infantry regiment (minus one alpine 78ml. battery, one escort 65ml. artillery platoon and one cavalry platoon. It seriously lacked armaments, clothing, footwear and reserve ammunition. Of 8 company commanders, 2 were 2nd lieutenants and 2 reserve captains. Of the 32 non-commissioned officers only 3 were career officers.

Total strength: 39 infantry battalions, 40 and a half batteries of various sectors

Strength approximately 35,000 men

Force comparison:

In Epirus: Against the 22 infantry battalions, 3 cavalry regiments, 61 batteries (18 heavy) and 90 battle tanks of the XXV Italian army corps, there were 15 infantry battalions, one reconnaissance group and 16 batteries (only 2 heavy) of the VIII division.

On Pindos: Against 5 infantry battalions and one cavalry troop of the Italian Alpine division, there were 2 infantry battalions, one cavalry troop and one and a half battery of the Pindos detachment.

In Western Macedonia: Against 17 infantry battalions, one cavalry troop, 24 batteries (5 heavy) and 10 battle tanks of the XXVI Italian army corps, there were 22 infantry battalions, 2 reconnaissance groups and 22 batteries (7 heavy) of the WMAS.

Conclusions: In Epirus, the superiority of the Italians in artillery and tanks was crushing. In the district of West Macedonia, the units were of equal strength with a slight superiority of the Greek ones. In the district of Pindos, the Italians were superior in approximately 2 to 1 proportion in infantry and 4 to 1 in artillery.

The following should also be noted: The security of the Greek coasts was precarious, due to the crushing superiority of the Italian navy. We depended only on the naval power of G. Britain and the burden of Libya on Italy. In the air force, the Italian ruled. Against 400 Italian aircraft, we availed 143 old types of small capabilities; the 65 for various missions (bombers etc.) were in good condition.

We should also add that: The defensive organization of the Greek soil, mainly in Epirus, with the intensive efforts of the VIII division, the inaccessibility of the ground with the limited transportation itineraries and the adverse weather conditions, were negative factors in the

Italians' offensive operations.

Strategic conclusion: The outcome of the operations, mainly in Epirus (location Elaia-Kalamas), were a matter of daring and stamina