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October 28

1940 Italy invades Greece

On this day in 1940, Mussolini's army, already occupying Albania, invades Greece in what will prove to be a disastrous military campaign for the Duce's forces.

Mussolini surprised everyone with this move against Greece; even his ally, Adolf Hitler, was caught off-guard, especially since the Duce had led Hitler to believe he had no such intention. Hitler denounced the move as a major strategic blunder. According to Hitler, Mussolini should have concentrated on

Africa

continuing the advance into

Egypt

. Even Mussolini's own chief of army staff found out about the invasion only after the fact. But despite being warned off an invasion of Greece by his own generals, despite the lack of preparedness on the part of his military, despite that it would mean getting bogged down in a mountainous country during the rainy season against an army willing to fight tooth and nail to defend its autonomy, Mussolini moved ahead out of sheer hubris, convinced he could defeat the Greeks in a matter of days. He also knew a secret, that millions of lire had been put aside to bribe Greek politicians and generals not to resist the Italian invasion. Whether the money ever made it past the Italian fascist agents delegated with the responsibility is unclear; if it did, it clearly made no difference whatsoever-the Greeks succeeded in pushing the Italian invaders back into

Albania

after just one week, and the Axis power spent the next three months fighting for its life in a defensive battle. To make matters worse, virtually half the Italian fleet at

Taranto

had been crippled by a British carrier-based attack.

Mussolini had been humiliated.

