

use all our available transport to move the incoming munitions, stores, etc. On the arrival of G.H.Q., the army services which had hitherto been under my command, together with the appropriate army staff officers, were transferred to Army control. These commitments and re-arrangements meant a certain amount of disorganisation in my command. The weather, however, was now improving and the landing grounds in the plains and valleys drying up. Therefore, no very great delays in our arrangements occurred.

Reorganisation of R.A.F.

25. The arrival of the British expeditionary force and the establishment of a new front meant a further reorganisation of my force and a readjustment of my slender resources. Although very few reinforcements had arrived as yet, and my pilots and air crews were beginning to feel the strain of heavy and continuous operations throughout the winter months, an additional burden was now thrust upon us. I still had to provide air support for the Greeks who were being ferociously attacked in Albania by the Italians, spurred on by the presence of Mussolini himself. I had to provide air escorts for incoming convoys, also some form of air defence for the ports of disembarkation of British troops which were becoming alarmingly congested. I had to deliver occasional attacks on the Dodecanese Islands to reduce the scale of enemy attacks on convoys which were becoming embarrassingly frequent, and finally, I had to allocate a portion of my force to support the position in process of occupation by British troops. I attach as Appendix "A" * to this report a memorandum which I issued on 18th March, pointing out the very parlous condition we were in at that time and describing how I proposed to attempt an almost impossible task. Apart from the fact that all my squadrons were much below strength in serviceable aircraft, due to the heavy casualties we had suffered and the unavoidable inability to keep us supplied with replacements, the re-equipping of my fighter squadrons with Hurricanes was not proceeding as rapidly as I had hoped. Furthermore, the arrival of reinforcing squadrons was not keeping pace with the programme decided upon and those that did arrive were much below establishment in aircraft and equipment. In spite of these difficulties and disappointments, however, I still hoped that time would be on our side and that, when the German attack developed, we would be in a reasonable state of preparedness to meet it.

The Battle of Cape Matapan.

26. On the 28th of March, a refreshing interlude to our troubles on land was afforded by the naval engagement off Cape Matapan. All our bombing squadrons took part and the Mediterranean fleet was able to bring the enemy to battle and inflict on them a smashing defeat.

The Fleet Air Arm.

27. At this juncture it is appropriate to mention the good work carried out by the Fleet Air Arm operating from western Greece. Six Swordfish aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm arrived in Greece on 11th March, and proceeded to Paramythia from where they operated against Valona and Durazzo harbours. Their task was beset by various difficulties. The high coun-

try surrounding Valona made a night approach awkward and hazardous, while it was almost impossible to get into the bay undetected. At Durazzo, the water was shallow and the approaches were thereby limited. Pilots reported the presence of night fighters over Valona. However, in spite of all this, several ships were sunk and many more hit and damaged during the period the Fleet Air Arm were with us.

Germany declares War on Yugo-Slavia and Greece.

28. In the meantime, events were moving rapidly in the Balkans. While the Regent of Yugo-Slavia was signing away the freedom of his country, a coup d'état was staged and we had a new ally. Large German forces had crossed the Danube and were moving into Bulgaria. Time was clearly running short. In spite of every effort, we were only able to arrange one so called "staff conference" with the Yugo-Slavs which did little beyond providing an opportunity for mutual criticism as to our state of unpreparedness for war, before the Germans declared war against both Greece and Yugo-Slavia on 6th April, and commenced invading both countries.

THE GERMAN INVASION.

29. I propose to deal with the air campaign against the German air force in somewhat greater detail than the operations hitherto carried out in Albania. I do this because I believe there are valuable lessons to be learnt which, owing to the great disparity between the British and German air forces in this campaign, are shown up in high relief. In addition, our air force gave support to a British army which may, perhaps, consider that the major cause which forced it to withdraw from its positions and eventually evacuate Greece altogether, lay in the lack of this very air support. I was fully aware that the air forces at my disposal could not give the support which the army desired and which we would like to have given. Although I stressed the fact, the full consequences were perhaps not clearly recognised by the army. I feel, however, that if various aspects of our air inferiority are discussed, a more complete comprehension of the issues which are at stake may be gained, and that we may thereby pave the way to a better mutual understanding between the Services, a state of affairs which is essential for the efficient conduct of modern war.

Organisation of R.A.F. Component.

30. At the time when Germany commenced the invasion, my force was organised as follows:

A Western Wing—consisting of one bomber and one fighter squadron (Gladiator) supporting the Greeks in Albania.

An Eastern Wing—consisting of two bomber and one Hurricane fighter squadrons supporting the Anglo-Greek forces facing the German advance. The squadrons of this wing occupied landing grounds on the Larissa plain which, although still soft after the winter rains, was now drying rapidly.

In the Athens area, I had one bomber squadron and one fighter squadron in process of re-arming with Hurricanes. Expressed in terms of aircraft, my total serviceable strength

* Not reproduced.