

Tobruk to strengthen the defence. It arrived in Tobruk on 7th April. Some tanks which had been under repair in Tobruk were available for the defence and I reinforced this armoured detachment with some more tanks from Egypt.

A mobile force consisting of the remains of the Support Group of the 2nd Armoured Division, strengthened by certain other detachments, was left outside the defences of Tobruk about El Adem. This force was driven back to the Egyptian frontier about Sollum by 11th April and from this date Tobruk became invested.

*Operations in Greece, 6th April to 30th April.*

34. The situation of the Imperial Forces on 6th April when the German attack opened was that the 1st Armoured Brigade Group and the New Zealand Division had arrived complete in the forward area and that the 6th Australian Division was in process of arrival. The 12th and 20th Greek Divisions were in the line but the so-called "mechanised" 19th Division had been moved across the River Axios and put under the command of the Eastern Macedonian Army, when the New Zealand Division took up its position.

35. The line held ran from the Aegean Sea east of Mount Olympus to Veria and Edessa and thence northwards to the Yugoslav frontier. Its length was approximately 100 miles, through high mountains in which there were four main passes—those on either side of Mount Olympus and those at Veria and Edessa. The railway ran between Mount Olympus and the coast, and roads through each of the other passes.

The New Zealand Division held the right of the line, including the two Olympus Passes; the 6th Australian Division was to assume the defence of the Veria Pass with one Brigade, the second being at Kozani, and the third in reserve. On the left of the Australians along the mountains was the 20th Greek Division; the 12th Greek Division, which was being relieved by the arrival of the Dominion troops, was also designed for a position in the mountains, for which its pack and ox-drawn transport was as suitable as our mechanical transport was unsuitable.

The position was naturally a strong one provided it was not turned through Yugoslavia. If the Germans succeeded in forcing a way through Yugoslavia the whole position could be outflanked from an easy valley which ran from Monastir down to Kozani. As early as 27th March General Wilson had begun to form a detachment at Amynteion to watch this gap, consisting of the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment, the 27th New Zealand Machine-gun Battalion, less two companies, and the 64th Medium Regiment, the whole under Brigadier Lee. On 8th April, three days after Germany invaded Yugoslavia and Greece, it became clear that Yugoslav resistance in the south had collapsed and that from Monastir southwards the road was open to the Germans. To meet this threat it was decided that no further relief in the Veria Pass should be undertaken by units of the 6th Australian Division, and that a force should be formed about Veve under Major-General Mackay, consisting of 19th Australian Infantry Brigade, less one battalion, with a Field Regiment and an Anti-Tank Regiment. Brigadier Lee's force was added to General Mackay's and later the remainder of

the 1st Armoured Brigade, after blowing the demolition belts east of the main position, also joined his command. At the same time Major-General Freyberg was ordered to move one brigade group of the New Zealand Division to Servia as a pivot on which any subsequent withdrawal from the north could be based.

These moves were completed early on 10th April.

36. The line was now held as follows:—

On the right was the New Zealand Division, one brigade group of the 6th Australian Division, the bulk of the 12th Greek Division (whose relief had been interrupted by the diversion of General Mackay's command to Amynteion) and certain other troops. All troops in this sector, Greek and Dominion, were under the command of General Blamey.

The centre sector, under Greek command, included the 20th and part of the 12th Greek Division.

The left sector, about Amynteion, consisted of the troops described above under the command of General Mackay, who was directly under the command of General Wilson.

On 12th April the 6th Australian Division and the New Zealand Division, hitherto called the 1st Australian Corps, became known as the "Anzac Corps." The revival of this historic title was welcomed with pride by all in the corps.

37. The first contact was made with the enemy on 8th April, when detachments of the 1st Armoured Brigade encountered elements of the enemy on the line of the River Axios. On the evening of 10th April, General Mackay's force was attacked in the Amynteion area. This developed next day into the first serious engagement, which lasted for two days. Although the enemy attack was held and heavy casualties inflicted on him, it was obvious that the Olympus-Veria-Amynteion position could not be held for ever. The position was much too extended for the troops available; there had not been time to consolidate it properly; the left flank was protected only by a Greek cavalry division on an extremely wide front, and between this cavalry division and the Greek forces in Albania there was a large gap through which the enemy were likely to penetrate.

A new line was therefore decided on, that running from Mount Olympus along the line of the River Aliakhmon. This was a strong position provided that the Yugoslavs and the Greeks were able to close the roads by which the line could be turned. The withdrawal began on the night 11th/12th April and was completed by dawn on the 13th. But during its course it became obvious that the 12th and 20th Greek Divisions were disintegrating. They soon became thoroughly disorganized and only a few sub-units retained any fighting value. This was due in no way to lack of courage or fighting spirit, but to their lack of modern armament and their ox-drawn transport, which was too slow and unwieldy as soon as it became necessary to embark on a long move. The withdrawal of General Mackay's force from Amynteion had to be covered by the 1st Armoured Brigade, who carried out successful counter-attacks on enemy armoured fighting vehicles. During this withdrawal the brigade experienced considerable mechanical trouble, similar to that of the 3rd Armoured Brigade in