



From PARIS to BERLIN(via Athens)



Our forces are spread right throughout Europe, indeed from Paris to Berlin as the title says. Our comrades in arms, the Croats, Romanians and Hungarians are fighting with us in Russia, Spain and also in Greece. Indeed it was the gallant charge by the the Croatian forces in Greece that helped to push back the Greeks in last months offensive. The picture shows Italian troops landing at Petras on the Greek mainland.

We have been given permission to embed one of our reporters with the forward units currently fighting in Greece, some of our readers may find some events upsetting. This is a mixture of how our reporter saw the events unfold and comments from the company commander.

"No naval support!!" commented the commander, "all available assets are either in dock repair or supporting in the attack on Crete". The silence was deafening, naval support had been allocated and then taken away, this would make the attack much harder. "At least we don't have to worry about being blown by the navy anyway" said a platoon sgt, obviously trying to lighten the gloom. A small chuckle rippled around the command bunker. As a substitute the support artillery and heavy mortar opened up, the attack was not long now. Shells landed on the enemy lines and there was a massive searing heat that swept over my trench. This bombardment had been going through the night, the idea being to deny the enemy troops any sleep or resupply, it had the same effect on us, no one could sleep with the noise.

The word spread down the line, prepare to move in five minutes. Equipment was checked and then re-checked, ammo was packed into every part of the body. Extra grenades were made available, these were bundled in fives for pill boxes and machine gun nests, bayonets were attached, last handshakes were made to fellow friends and death letters were handed to company runner. Scared men, many who were veterans tried to make light of the situation with

the usual bravado of jokes and sexual innuendo, but you could see it was false. The company commander named Paulo ran through his final preparations with the other officers, his company was spearhead for his sectors attack.

The attack prep entered its final stages with the arrival of over two hundred bombers, the whole frontline of the enemy was battered, no one could survive the shrapnel, heat or shockwave from these bombs. Then we were over and running, 5 metres, 10 metres, 20 metres, we made over 100 metres before it hit us. The well prepared machine gun nests all opened up together, tracer was hitting the ground all around us and over us. Soldiers were crying with agony as the first rounds hit them, some were lucky than others and died outright, others were left in agony until medics could get to them. Some were walking around in shock looking for limbs and anything else totally oblivious to the danger surrounding them. The attack slowly ground down, A company was pinned. The target line was short by 100 metres, Paulo ordered support company to lay down a mixture of HE and smoke, thump, thump thump went the mortars. This was a dangerous tactic indeed but one that had to be carried out if the attack had to move forward again. The smell of cordite mixed with smoke was enough to make you cough and your eyes water. There was another smell mixed in that I could not place yet.

Just as the smoke was beginning to clear, the first enemy trench was in sight. At first I wondered what the black dots were and then realised it was grenades. A sgt from 1st platoon rallied his men and charged the first trench as soon as the grenades went off.

Every now and again you would see the helmets of the Italian troops as they ran along the trench line, followed by either a grenade going off or a burst of machine gun fire. With the first line breached the rest of the company started to flood through this area, it quickly became a bottle neck and the Greek forces noticed this, they opened with their mortars, it was a killing field. Men were running into each other trying to find what little cover they could in the mountain area. Our mortars countered the greek mortars as they had given their position away. The greek mortars soon fell silent. This time it was more organised movement through the breach.

The first line was ours!!!. No time to wait, troops set up position awaiting a counter attack from the Greeks, it never came. A quick check of ammo, wounded and dead filtered its way to the OC, less than predicted casualties and now ahead of time. Reports filtered through that B company had made good gains but were now pinned down and possibly in a position to be overrun or surrounded. Tank support was with C company at present taking out some bunkers, the only support available was a small detachment of flamethrower tanks and a new formed unit called the UTRAS, untried and untested in battle as a unit but made up of veteran volunteers, they gladly accepted this impossible task.

More news to follow on the attack in next newspaper.



Machine gun nest in winter conditions in Greece