

KALAVRYTA: Occupation of 1941-1944
and
the Holocaust of December 13, 1943
Memories from the Village of Aghios Nikolaos



The Grieving Mother of Kalavryta

Peter N. Demopoulos

LOS ANGELES, 2017

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*...and you shall know the truth
and the truth shall set you free.
(John 8.32)*

2017

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Some Terms and Commonly Used Acronyms

<i>Andartes</i>	Greek Resistance fighters, guerrilla fighters, mainly rebels of EAM and KKE
EAM	National Liberation Front, the largest umbrella organization of the resistance during the Occupation
ELAS	National People's Liberation Army, the military wing of EAM After the Occupation ended the Greek Civil War began, it was renamed as the Democratic Army(DS) and consisted exclusively of Communist led guerrillas fighting the National Army.
EPON	United Pan-Hellenic Youth Organization. It was the training organization for ELAS
KKE	Communist Party of Greece, controlled EAM and all other organizations under it.
OPLA	Organization for the Defense of the People's Struggle. It was the enforcer of KKE known for its extreme cruelty and arbitrary justice.

Village names in the region around Kalavryta that changed

<u>New Name</u>	<u>Old Name</u>
Amygdalia	Mamalouka
Ano Klitoria	Karnesi
Aroania	Sopoto
Blaherna	Savanous
Dafne	Strezova
Drakovouni	Glogova
Drosato	Pano Goumenitsa
Drymos	Mostitsi
Glastra	Vrosthena
Kallifonio	Savani
Kallithea	Kani
Kerasia	Kerasova
Kleitoria	Mazeika
Kryoneri	Asani
Lefkasio	Tsorota
Lefki	Dounisa
Lousi	Soudena
Lousiko	Hamakou
Mygdalia	Glanitsa
Ortholithos	Saradi
Paos	Skoupi
Priolithos	Syrbani
Skepasto	Visoka
Skotani	Kokova
Theoktisto	Toporista

FOREWORD

This is an updated edition to the 2013 booklet published in remembrance of the 70th Anniversary of the December 13, 1943 Holocaust in Kalavryta, Greece, committed by the occupying German Army. This narrative examines the events leading up to the Holocaust that culminated in the brutal killing of the male population and the destruction of the homes of the town of Kalavryta. Several neighboring villages and two ancient monasteries near Kalavryta, Aghia Lavra and Mega Spileon, were attacked, suffered and severely victimized as well. The horrific events of the Occupation of 1941-1944 eventually led to a very destructive Greek Civil War that ended in early 1949.

To collect this information, I researched the available sources dealing with World War II Greece. The most useful of these sources are listed in References, including new material that became available to me since the first edition of 2013. Also included are personal recollections of some events that occurred in my own village of Aghios Nikolaos ... as I heard them from others or as I experienced them myself.

My objective is to present a concise and easily readable description of the events. By no means, should my work be interpreted as a thorough and academic treatment of the subject. Fortunately, several books have been published in recent years on the Kalavryta Holocaust, but they are printed in Greek and not easily accessible. The most comprehensive and meticulous source is the 780-page book by the German historian Hermann Frank Meyer, ***From Vienna to Kalavryta***, first published in Greek 2003 and available in German and Greek. It is based on primary sources from German archives and interviews of German and Greek eyewitnesses or their close associates. Other sources are by authors who participated in the Greek Resistance and were members of the EAM (National Liberation Front) and, as expected, their writings are tainted by their political leanings and passions. Some sources are now available online and include two dissertations, a lengthy PhD thesis by Maria Filosofhou (2012) from the University of Patra and a Master's thesis by Panagiotis Stouras (2012) from the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. Both present and analyze information obtained primarily from original sources. There is also an extensive photographic collection at the **Museum of Holocaust Archives** in Kalavryta. Recently, additional testimonies have been published in the online newspaper **KalavrytaNews.com**.

I examined these sources, added my own personal experiences, and attempted to present here a balanced picture of the events of the Kalavryta Holocaust. It is expected that those at the political extremes will disagree with some of my comments.

The Greeks Defend Themselves Against the Invaders, 1940-1941

The Province of Kalavryta is a mountainous area in northern Peloponnese. It is surrounded by high mountain ranges, which make communication by land or by sea difficult with other major towns outside of the Province. This was especially true before the “geared” train connecting the capital town of Kalavryta to the Patra-Corinth railway at Diakofto was built in 1896, and before modern roads were completed in the 1970’s. The geography of the land affected the character of the people who are proud and ready to make sacrifices to preserve their freedom. The isolation made them self-sufficient and independent. This is the reason that in 1821 Kalavrytans were first in Greece to raise the Banner of the Revolution at the monastery of Aghia Lavra against the Ottomans. It is hard to believe now but at the time of the Greek War of Independence, the Province of Kalavryta was the most populous province in the Peloponnese. In the census of 1828, the Kalavryta Province had a population of 35,509, while Patra had 13,572 and Eghion (then called Vostitsa) had only 3,080.

Population comparison of various towns and villages
(from Official Census Reports)

City/Village	1940	1951	2011
Patra*	79,570	88,811	171,484
Eghion*	15,259	15,699	26,523
Tripoli*	14,961	17,585	25,570
Kalavryta Town	2,712	2,208	1,829
Dafni/Strezova	2552	2215	434
Kleitoria/Mazeika	1727	1436	713
Aghios Nikolaos	318	276	52
Ano Kleitoria/Karnessi	577	500	50
Arbounas	222	174	52
Filia	1058	965	211
Glastra/Vrosthena	362	327	61
Kastria	273	237	145
Kerpini	615	382	173
Kertezi	1442	1265	365
Krinyfyta	524	564	139
Lefkasio/Tsorota	421	449	89
Livartzi	932	809	211
Lousi/Soudena	832	714	165
Lykouria	1109	982	430
Pangrati	740	756	63
Planitero	453	494	197
Priolithos/Syrbani	535	435	91
Rogi	275	164	100
Sigouni	440	367	79
Skepasto/Vissoka	1015	959	514
Tourlada	262	227	28
Zachlorou	657	222	112

* These are not in the Province of Kalavryta but they are nearby and are shown for comparison purposes.

In addition to the capital town of Kalavryta, there are about 60 villages and small towns spread throughout the Province. The town of Kalavryta (the name means “good flowing springs”) is the administrative and main commercial center. Due to its alpine climate at 735 me-

ters (2,420 feet) above sea level, its lack of mosquitos, and its abundant and cool waters, the town before the war was a summer resort for wealthy families from Patra, Eghion and Athens. Transportation to and from the Corinth-Patra road was achieved using a “geared” train rail that was completed in 1896 and was one of the major public works projects of 19th century Greece. Before the war in 1940, Kalavryta had a Gymnasium (grades 7th through 12th) with 14 teachers and about 500 students. Another Gymnasium of about equal size was in the town of Mazeika (later renamed Kleitoria), which served the southeastern part of the Province. In recent years, one of the main attractions in the area is the skiing in the nearby mountain of Helmos. The figures in the table demonstrate the huge loss of population of Kalavryta and its villages after the war, and especially in recent years.

On October 28, 1940, when Mussolini’s troops attacked Greece, the farmers and shepherds who mostly inhabited the Kalavryta Province were about to finish plowing their small farms to plant that year’s wheat. On that day, the call went out for all men to appear for military service, calling up men of younger ages first and gradually older men. Also, every family was ordered to keep only one mule or horse, and surrender all others for military use. Every citizen, without exception, immediately obeyed and was proud to sacrifice and serve their country. Those who had not yet finished plowing, paired their remaining mule with that of a neighbor’s to finish the planting. A week later, another order came to surrender all mules and horses for military use. Again, everyone obeyed these orders.

Before the war, first with Italy and later with Germany, was over, all men up to the age of 37 had been ordered to appear and served in the armed forces. Those able-bodied over 37 were also called up to replace younger policemen and civil servicemen, including schoolteachers who had been transferred to the war front.

After the Greek troops defeated the Italians in the Albanian Front and pushed them deep into Albania, Nazi Germany attacked Greece on April 6, 1941, along a wide front extending across Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Greece was overwhelmed and surrendered to the Germans after Yugoslavia collapsed, but not to the Italians. Bombing of the main towns continued throughout the duration of the war. After the surrender, the territory of Greece was divided among Germany, Italy, and Bulgaria, and each imposed its brutal and unconditional occupation terms.*

In late May of 1941, a mechanized German army unit arrived in Kalavryta and continued on to Mazeika, the other major town in the Province now called by its ancient name of Kleitoria. The Germans were looking for British soldiers who were stuck behind after the withdrawal of British troops from Greece and were attempting to reach harbors in order to be picked up by the British navy. While there, the German soldiers tried to terrorize the population into submission by posting various threatening decrees and announcing threats if their orders are not obeyed.

* Germany attacked Greece on April 6 and its troops arrived in Athens on April 27, 1941. The Greek government withdrew to Crete on April 25th where the Germans were held off until the end of May. This delayed the German schedule for invading Russia by about a month. Looking back near the end of the War, Hitler blamed his ultimate defeat on his effort to help his friend, Mussolini, to capture Greece.

The Italian Occupation

The three occupiers of Greece, Italy, Germany, and Bulgaria, agreed that the Peloponnese belonged to the Italian occupation zone. The Italians installed permanent police departments in several major towns, including Kalavryta and Mazeika. The *carabinieri* immediately set out to live off the country by requisitioning people's homes and buildings for their own use. They also went through the neighboring villages trying to loot valuables and food from homes, especially preferring chickens, eggs, cheese, and wine. They also declared a capital crime the possession of any type of gun, including hunting or antique guns that were used during the Greek Revolutionary War era of 120-years earlier. Possession of any gun carried the death penalty. They brutally interrogated citizens, and even children, on the spot or after hauling them to the *Carabinieri*. In Mazeika, the Italian police were housed in Christos Giannoulia's building. That was where the infamous "Giuseppe" tortured his victims. After beating his victims mercilessly, he then would kick them at the top of the stairs causing them to roll down to the bottom of the stairs. To end the torture, some victims would agree to falsely accuse others of some "illegal" act. Thus, many tortured victims were innocent of the accusations. Other times, "Giuseppe" would offer food as a reward to extort information about gun possession, regardless of the accuracy of the information he received by using torture.

When Greece capitulated to the invaders, the Italians decided that all horses and mules the Greek army had requisitioned for the war effort were now war loot that belonged to them. Because the villagers depended on these animals for their livelihood, they were desperate to get them back. My father traveled from our village of Aghios Nikolaos to Kalavryta where the Italian army was selling their loot. He bought a mule and brought it to the village. A few days later, the Italian police came by and took that mule because the receipt he had "was not properly stamped." As a result, he was forced to pay again in order to buy it back a second time.

Price increases of basic necessities, in drachmas (1 oka = 1,28 Kg)

Product	10-28-40	8-24-43	1-15-44	2-25-44	3-10-44
Bread (oka)	10	7,000	34,000	132,000	196,000
Meat	50	36,000	300 000	480 000	580,000
Olive oil	50	36,000	200 000	680 000	940,000
Sugar	19	24,000	160 000	500 000	730,000
Eggs(each)	2	1,800	13,000	20 000	310,000
Potatoes	6	7,500	40,000	100,000	160,000
1 overcoat	3,500	1,000,000	10,000,000	20,000,000	35,000,000
1 pair of shoes	450	300,000	2,000,000	6,500,000	40,000,000

Report by the German Chamber of Commerce in Greece, on 3-10-44. Published in the book **Greek Resistance 1936-1949** by Heinz Richter, 1973, p.168.

The constant looting, the decrease of agricultural production, the deterioration of commerce, and the printing of bogus money by the occupation forces, quickly caused high inflation and black market trading throughout Greece, but more seriously in the urban areas where it

quickly developed into a serious shortage of food and other necessities. As shown on the table in the previous page, bread went from 10 drachmas at the start of the war to 7,000 in 3 years. Six months later, in March of 1944, the price of bread was nearly 200,000 drachmas.

A special tax of 10% (*Dekati*) was imposed on all production items in order to fund the maintenance of civil services. On top of all these, the chaos and upheaval destroyed the environment. Forests and even trees in farms were cut to be used as fuel for heating and cooking. The reduced farm production, the lack of imports, and the looting, destroyed the fragile economy and Greece descended into a severe famine situation. Thus, in the first year of Occupation, especially the winter of 1941-1942, it was for Greeks a huge struggle for survival, and hundreds of thousands died of hunger, disease, and exposure to the elements. In Athens, it is estimated that 260,000 starved to death (Eudes).

Greeks Resist the Occupation

With the total collapse of civil authority, and without any apparent leadership, pockets of resistance were organized throughout Greece, including the province of Kalavryta. Already by September 1941, EAM (the National Liberation Front) was organizing the resistance against Italians and Germans, and branches of it were training young people in collecting and distributing food for the *Andartes* (resistance fighters) of ELAS (the Greek Liberation Army), the military wing of EAM. The national youth organization was called EPON.

At about the same time, other organizations were being formed, some by former military officers, but none could match EAM, which was unique in that it did not have a prominent leader. Instead it had the “committee” or the “organization” that made decisions. At the local level it was the “responsible authority” making the decisions. The lack of a prominent leader may be one reason why EAM was so successful and so widely accepted by the people. Another important reason was that behind EAM was the well organized and disciplined KKE (the Communist Party of Greece). Although it is estimated that of all those in the EAM organization less than 10% were Communist Party members, the Party completely controlled EAM. One of the most prominent leaders and founder of ELAS, Aris Velouchiotis, had declared “Those who do not support Communism by every means will be arrested by OPLA and executed*.” This discipline essentially eliminated all other resistance groups. Some anti-Communist groups became collaborationists with the occupying forces and claimed that they did it to save their lives.

The generally accepted military leader in the Kalavryta area was the 52-year old Dimitrios Michos, known as the “Old Man,” who was a former colonel in the Greek Air Force. He claimed that he had no political affiliation. The people who joined EAM were from all walks of life and of all social backgrounds, from military officers to farmers, and from clerks to priests, and most of all, the villagers and the youth.

The geography and history of Kalavryta again played a significant role in the Resistance. In the beginning of 1943, some members of ELAS (in Greek called *Andartes*, and in German called

* Filosofofou, p. 360. OPLA stands for Organization for the Protection of the People’s Struggle. It was the “enforcer” of Communist Party discipline and usually executed anyone who was thought to oppose Communism.

partisans) from Roumeli crossed the Corinthian Gulf and came up to Soudena in the hinterlands (the village now is called "Lousi" and is just a few miles from Kalavryta) to have a meeting with the local EAM to provide organizational advice and to coordinate the attacks against the enemy in the Peloponnese. They were also joined by two British liaison officers who were there to coordinate local efforts with the needs of the Allied Command in Cairo*.

At the end of May of 1943, a local Resistance unit attacked the Italian police station in Mazeika and the Greek police in the adjacent building who were supporting them. The Italians did not dare come out of the building to help their Greek allies, who surrendered with all their military supplies. On the next day, a large Italian force came to reinforce the local police and to destroy the resistance in the area once and for all. On their way, they met a couple of young shepherds from the nearby village of Karnesi (now called Ano Kleitoria). They searched them and found some fliers that had been distributed by the Resistance. They tortured the two boys and, on the next day, they took one to the cemetery in Mazeika where they had him dig his own grave before executing him. The other boy was executed in Kalavryta a day later.

Other Italian soldiers went to search some shepherd huts in the nearby village of Arbounas where they found 3 young shepherds tending their flocks. One youth, Sotirios Vlahos, had an antique gun from the Revolutionary War era in his shepherd's hut so they took him to the cemetery in Mazeika, had him dig his own grave and then executed him. The second one, Athanasios Kyriakopoulos, had a pocketknife, usually carried by shepherds, and was taken to Kalavryta where he was executed. The third, Dimitrios Vlahos, managed to jump down a cliff and escaped. However, he broke his leg and, due to lack of medical attention, he limped for the rest of his life. After the war, he owned the cheese-making factory in Mazeika.

The Italians received information that some *Andartes* under Michos were in the large village of Filia. So, on July 20th, Saint Elias Day, a large Italian force tried to encircle and destroy the *Andartes* who were spending the night in Filia. The *Andartes* could have sneaked away but decided to stand and fight the much larger Italian force. The Italians lost 25 dead and 20 wounded, and the *Andartes* lost 2 dead and 5 wounded. As a reprisal, the Italians executed 6 innocent local residents and burned most of the village homes[†]. In the end, the victory belonged to the *Andartes*, but the price paid by the villagers was very high. Filia became the first village in Province to be burned and to have innocent civilians killed as a reprisal.

After this encounter, the Italians brought more reinforcements to Mazeika and Kalavryta, but they never succeeded in reducing the momentum of the Resistance. At about this time, Mussolini was unexpectedly toppled and the Italian military fell apart. Within weeks, the Italians realized the futility of their efforts and completely abandoned Mazeika to concentrate their forces in Kalavryta. But soon, on September 11, 1943, Italy capitulated to the Allies and the Italians surrendered either to the *Andartes* or to the Germans. The main concern for the Italian soldiers from then on was how to get home alive. A lot of the Italian weapons ended up in the hands of the *Andartes* and some Italian soldiers actually joined the Greek Resistance. The Ger-

* The British agents reluctantly had to work with EAM and supplied weapons and money. However, near the end the relationship soured because the British became concerned about the Communist dominance of the Resistance.

[†] Rodakis, p. 107

mans turned against the Italians taking many of them as prisoners of war. Thousands of Italian soldiers drowned on their way home when their ships were sunk by German or British naval ships, or by Allied bombers. Others ended up working as slaves in German factories.

On August 1, 1943, a huge air raid by American planes took place against the Axis oil fields in Ploesti, Romania.* The planes took off from Bengazi, Libya, and returned without refueling. There were huge losses due to enemy attacks and lack of sufficient fuel to return to their base in Africa. On their return leg, the aircraft formation passed over the village of Aghios Nikolaos and seemed like they covered the whole sky when one of them exploded and debris filled the countryside. Fortunately, there were no Italians or Germans nearby so, two crew members who survived the crash, were helped by the villagers to get to the sea shore where a British submarine picked them up a few days later.

The Germans Replace the Italians

In the summer of 1943, the Germans sensed that Italy was collapsing and began preparations to replace the Italian forces in the Peloponnese. On the 29th of August, a German column left Patra for Kalavryta. On the way, the Germans found some workers on a farm and shot them. The following day they reached Kalavryta, and from there they made quick visits to various villages, shooting at villagers who ran to hide from them. In nearby Soudena, they burned some houses, and in the process, they caught a teen-ager with a gun, Dino Pavlopoulos, when he accidentally stumbled upon them. They brought him to Kalavryta and hanged him in the town square with a sign on his chest reading: "THIS IS HOW GERMANS PUNISH PARTISANS." Then they forced all residents to go there and view the hanging body.†

The Germans left Kalavryta on September 4, after looting and taking with them whatever they could carry. Before leaving, they gave the following order: "*If Andartes come back to Kalavryta, we will come and level the town, turn it to rubble and kill all its people.*" However, this is not a promise the residents could keep, even if they wanted to, since the *Andartes* made their decisions without consulting the residents. (Kaldiris, **The Drama of Kalavryta**, p. 23)

Many of the Italian soldiers who still remained in Kalavryta surrendered to the *Andartes* of Michos on September 11, the day Italy joined the Allies. The Germans rushed back to Kalavryta, disarmed the remaining Italians and took them to Patra. An Italian battalion ran there to help their compatriots, but the *Andartes* surprised them and these Italians surrendered to the *Andartes* on September 12.

From the surrendered Italians, the *Andartes* obtained large supplies of weapons and ammunition, which enabled them to arm many more *Andartes*. Meanwhile, the sabotaging of roads, bridges and telephone lines by the *Andartes* intensified in order to inhibit or delay German communications and troop movements.

* This air raid consisted of 175 American B-25 bombers, the largest mission ever attempted.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Tidal_Wave

† <http://www.kalavrytanews.com>, 2016/06/09

When the Italians first arrived in Mazeika, they tried to complete the Kalavryta-Mazeika-Tripoli road, which had begun to be built before the war but was never finished. As a result, motor vehicles could come to Mazeika only through Patra, on the West. The Italians needed a military road to connect with Tripoli in the East, and tried to build it with forced labor using laborers from the nearby villages. The president of each village was obligated to choose a number of men to work there every day, without payment. The Resistance opposed this and the residents had to choose between two life-threatening evils. Meanwhile, the road construction was being delayed.

When the Nazis assumed power, the situation deteriorated further. The villagers were terrorized by unprovoked killings and decided that they had to run to the mountains to hide and save themselves every time they heard that Germans were coming. Each village posted sentries to get about a half-hour warning. To protect their belongings and necessities, the villagers built hidden and fireproof shelters in their basements, or sheds, or even caves. When German soldiers reached a village, they usually found only old men and old women and some women with small children. In Aghios Nikolaos, the residents usually ran to hide in the forested area above the village. My father told me that he only saw German soldiers only once, when they first arrived, and he got so scared that he always hid and never came face-to-face with them again. But people had to be careful even in the mountains, because one of the village young men, Athanasios Ghikas, was shot and killed by the Germans while grazing his flock on the wooded mountain ridge above the village.

In Aghios Nikolaos, the Germans burned down the houses belonging to the families of Dimitrios Karahalios, Eftastathios Gournias, and Papadopoulos-Tozanis because these families had boys active in the Resistance.

The Security Battalions

From the beginning of their arrival, the Nazis wanted to have Greek collaborators to do the fighting for them against the Resistance. They also needed people who knew the terrain and could provide guides and intelligence. They had realized that their own forces were inadequate to quell the resisting population. The German commander in Southern Greece, Gen. Hellmuth Felmy, obtained Hitler's permission to arm Greeks, and in collaboration with the German-appointed Prime Minister, Ioannis Rallis, formed the forces called *Security Battalions* to fight off the Resistance. The main motive of the Germans was to augment their own forces, and the apparent motive of the Greeks in the battalions was mainly to fight off the "red menace" or to be rewarded with food and clothing.

The Battalions were founded in 1943 by the Greek puppet government of Rallis and were supported by the extreme right and Nazi sympathizers, but also by some centrist politicians who were concerned about the dominance of ELAS (the military arm of the communist-dominated National Liberation Front, EAM). Among the members of the Security Battalions one could find ex-army officers, forcefully conscripted soldiers, conservatives, landowners, fascist sympathizers and social outcasts, as well as common opportunists who believed the Axis would win the war. There were some Greek admirers of the Germans, and one of them even sent a congratulatory

letter to Hitler for surviving the assassination attempt. He was Col. Dionysis Papadogonas, whom the Germans rewarded by being appointing him commander of a Security Battalion.

Members of the battalions pledged in their oath "*belief in Hitler and obedience to our superiors.*" The German army supplied and armed the battalions and took them along in its missions. At times the battalions fought alongside the Germans, and other times they fought alone, mostly against EAM and ELAS. It was claimed that they reached 22 thousand, an incredibly high number for Greece, yet they avoided fighting pitched battles with ELAS, which had a better organization and better-trained men with superior fighting spirit.

When the Germans left Greece, the battalions quickly changed sides and allied themselves with the Greek Government-in-Exile and its British backers with the mission to exterminate the Communists in Greece. Some of the more prominent members, who were afraid of being prosecuted for war crimes, accompanied the German army when it left Greece.

A Google search on the battalions will bring up a number of very good articles on the subject, including "Security Battalions and the Civil War" by Andre Gerolymatos, and the Wikipedia article at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Security_Battalions.

People's Courts (*Laika Dikastiria*)

The Resistance organized a justice system, with civil courts to adjudicate differences between civilians, and military courts (*Andartodikeia*) for "treasonous crimes," especially those involving *Andartes*. Every village had a first level civil court that judged minor disputes between citizens and was staffed with ordinary citizens who had no legal knowledge and used primarily common sense and tradition to decide a case. In Aghios Nikolaos, one of the judges was the café owner, Dimos Panopoulos.

Because Aghios Nikolaos has good visibility of the roads to and from the German base in Mazeika, the village hosted for a time the EAM Provincial Command and the *Andartodikeio* for the Province. The cases decided there had life or death consequences. The justice was swift and the decisions were "Death" if found guilty, or "Death commuted to probation", or "Innocence." There was nothing in-between, and the trials lasted only a few minutes. A well-known case was tried there in July of 1944, with the Mayor of Eghion, 65-year old Alexandros Kazanis, as the defendant. Earlier, in November of 1943, he and a priest representing the Metropolitan Theoklitos of Eghion were the go-betweens in the negotiations for the release of the German prisoners prior to the destruction of Kalavryta. The charges against him were: "*Consorting with the enemy, accumulating exorbitant wealth, encouraging workers to go to Germany for employment, and organizing laborers to dig ditches in exchange for food.*" Probably the true reasons were his involvement in the negotiations and because he had been the appointed mayor by the Rallis puppet government.

After the charges were read, he was given five minutes to defend himself. His defense was: "*I could not avoid talking with the enemy because of my position as Mayor. It was not my choice to deal with the enemy because the enemy came to me. As for my wealth, it is all inherited; I did not make it myself. About the other charges, I did not think it was illegal to help people find*

work.” The decision of the court was “Death,” and was carried out late that same night by a volunteer firing squad. That evening, it was my father’s turn to serve in the security detail, and he recalled later how concerned he was that he might have to participate in taking the life of this man. Fortunately, there were plenty of bloodthirsty volunteers to take his place.

The leftist filmmaker Theodoros Angelopoulos has a scene about this case in his movie **The Traveling Players**, or *Thiasos* in Greek. To dramatize the case even more against the overweight mayor, and justify the conviction, he piled on additional charges, including exchange of food for sex, deviant behavior, etc.

At the beginning of 1944, ELAS decided to establish a prison camp in the village of Sigouni to hold “suspicious characters,” relatives of “reactionaries,” and “possible collaborators with the enemy,” not because they had evidence against these people, but simply because they had suspicions, or someone had accused them, all without any proof. They held a few hundred people there, most of whom were totally innocent. The holding conditions were extremely inhumane, with OPLA members doing guard duty. Even Communist writers, such as Pericles Rodakis in his book **Kalavryta 1941-1944**, states that “*The creation of prisoner camps was an irrational decision because the Andartes could not hold permanent positions.*” During a German raid, the OPLA people responsible for the camp panicked and executed the inmates in order to “prevent them from falling into German hands.” Similar, and even worse crimes occurred in the neighboring province of Feneos, where EAM brought armed reinforcements from Roumeli to help exterminate resistance groups that did not swear allegiance to the KKE. The monastery of Saint George was turned into a prison camp. Most of these prisoners, including the Abbot, were executed and the monastery became known as the “Bloody Monastery.”

After the spring of 1944, the justice system of EAM degenerated completely, with frequent assassinations and executions without even token trials, or with trials where the decisions were dictated a priori from “above.” From this time on, the KKE started to practice classical Stalinist justice of purges and elimination by execution. The members of OPLA acted irrationally and terrorized people by exterminating whole families. Even high ranking EAM members were purged and sent to exile or were executed. The very able Dimitrios Michos who was the military leader in the Peloponnese was transferred to Roumeli and given the useless position of “Minister of the Greek Air Force” at a time when Greece had no planes. Later on, Aris Velouchiotis, an ardent Communist and the founder of ELAS (a member of the Central Committee of the KKE and a very ruthless man himself) was expelled from the KKE and was pursued until he committed suicide to save his honor. (Dominique Eudes, p. 239)

German Reprisals

Up to the beginning of 1943, the resistance in Greece was not yet considered by the Wehrmacht to be a problem because there were only a few *Andartes* in the Peloponnese who directed their activities mainly against the Italians. The situation changed when more German forces were moved into Greece. After the collapse of Italy, the Wehrmacht had to face the problem of the Resistance directly. In July of that year, Hitler ordered that the Resistance be eliminated by whatever means, without consideration of international treaty limitations, because, by

Nazi interpretation, treaties pertained only to regular armies. His order was “*to execute not only Andartes but also any suspects who could be Andartes and those who help them, remove all materials and wealth from the area, and destroy the infrastructure that might be supporting the rebellion.*” With this interpretation, the Wehrmacht began to arrest and hold hostages and burn villages when any of its residents were suspected of being *Andartes*, and ordered the occupying forces, when resisted, to not only punish the guilty ones, but to apply methods of mass terror. One military order was that “*the fear of German reprisals must exceed the threat of the Andartes*” (Heinz Richter).

Following instructions from Hitler, Field Marshall Keitel’s order to the troops in 1942 was: “*...take any measures without restriction, even against women and children if these are necessary for success. [Humanitarian] considerations of any kind are a crime against the German nation....*” (Mark Mazower). Keitel’s order to his subordinates was that the punishment should be up to 100:1 kill ratio against the enemy, including civilians. When he was asked at the Nuremberg trials how he came up with that ratio, he said that he proposed 10:1 but Hitler added an extra zero. (Meyer, p. 47).

As soon as German soldiers were allowed to take these actions as reprisals, or as “atone-ment measures,” as they called them, it did not take long to degenerate to actions that led to the Holocaust of Kalavryta and the pillaging and killing that took place in the nearby villages. Other villages throughout Greece had similar fate, but the Kalavryta massacre had the greatest number of victims in Greece. Any miniscule or rare sign of tolerance or humane action shown by German troops was only due to the instincts of individual soldiers.

The commanding officer of the Jager Division in the Peloponnese, Gen. Karl von Le Suire, was of the opinion that reprisals, even against civilians, were necessary to enforce discipline and instil fear in the population. His superior, Gen. Hellmuth Felmy, claimed later that he disagreed, as did the Col. Julius Woelfinger who was the commander in Patra. A firm believer in reprisals was Maj. Hans Ebersberger who ended up being in charge of carrying out the Holocaust in Kalavryta and the villages around it.

The Near-Destruction of Aghios Nikolaos, September 1943

When the Italians left, the Nazis who replaced them in September of 1943 established themselves permanently in Mazeika. The local Resistance decided to destroy the road and wire communications connecting Mazeika and Tripoli in order to cut off any German reinforcements. The plan was to have all able-bodied men from the nearby villages assemble in Aghios Nikolaos on the evening of September 16, 1943, and when darkness falls, pass through the neighboring village of Turlada and descend into the narrow valley, cross the Aroanios River and sabotage the road and telephone line going parallel to the river, near the foot of the Tsorota mountain. Men from other villages further south and east, such as Krinofyta, Lykouria, Filia, Pangrati, etc., were also to participate. Everyone carried pick axes and other hand tools necessary for the sabotage.

Unfortunately, the organization and the necessary precautions were inadequate, especially when some of the men lighted up their cigarettes in the darkness while on the way and still visi-

ble from the German camp in Mazeika. When they got to the site for the sabotage, late in the evening, German military vehicles arrived with their lights off until they came close, then turned on the lights and started shooting at the saboteurs who, in the darkness, scattered in all directions and ran to get as far away as possible. Some jumped in the river and got across it and ran for the hills, towards their homes. Others climbed up the Tsorota Mountain in the opposite direction. The latter had to travel away from their homes and make a large circle of 2-3 days hike before getting to Aghios Nikolaos. Again, those who went directly to Aghios Nikolaos, as soon as they were out of shooting range, lit up their cigarettes, either out of ignorance or to tease the Germans who were too far away to shoot in the darkness.

The Germans saw all the activity and thought that they could sneak at night up to Aghios Nikolaos, surround it, and in the morning capture hundreds of the saboteurs and *Andartes*. Just before dawn, as the Germans were hiking up on the two ridges on either side of the village, a villager who was doing sentry duty, heard the characteristic sound of German boots on the gravel* about 1.5 miles before reaching the village, and started yelling: "*The cattle are in the bean fields.*" Other sentries heard it and repeated it. When the Germans heard the screams, they started shooting in the dark, alarming the villagers. Just about everyone in the village woke up and ran to hide, even though they did not know from which direction the enemy was coming. Most men had arrived only minutes earlier from the sabotage and had just fallen asleep. The ones who were still hiking were the lucky ones because they were too far away from the village. Most of those in the village ran up into the forest above. This was the safest place because it is well covered with high trees and, in this case, the only side of the village not encircled by the Germans. Others ran into the nearby gorge that is between the village and the "Theodosi" ridge where German soldiers were hiking upwards. In other words, these villagers were going towards the Germans.

My mother stayed home with me. My grandmother went to hide in a bean field near the gorge. My father, who had just arrived from the sabotage, woke up the two older children, my brother Andrew who was 10 and my sister Katherine who was 9, and ran for the gorge, which is about 10 minutes away from the house. As they were running, my father noticed that the little girl was holding her shoes in her hands and told her, "Put on your shoes, quickly." Sensing the danger, she replied, "I'll put them on later," and continued running while holding her shoes. A few seconds after they jumped into the dry riverbed, shots rang out and some people who were still out on the road were shot. The teenager Kostas Panopoulos and his mules were the first victims. Further up on another road, they shot the Katsimikoulias couple from Mazeika as they were riding their horses towards the mountain. The elderly man and the two horses were killed, his wife survived. A grandmother, Chrysafo Dupas, holding her 11-year old blind granddaughter by the hand, was also killed. The blind girl sat down on the road and survived. They were shooting at my grandmother too, but she ducked behind a tree trunk and no bullets hit her. Some nearby sheep were startled and ran for cover.

* German boots had nail heads on their shoe soles and made a characteristic sound when walking on stone or gravel streets and pathways.

When the Germans reached the village, they went house-to-house searching for men. They ordered my mother and me, and all other women and children, to go to the church courtyard. I remember waiting there with my mother, facing some machine guns. Being so young, I had no idea what was going on. My mother recalled later that the soldiers were asking for the village priest (Papa-Takis), and for Kostas Demopoulos who spoke German.* The priest's wife went out to search for the priest, calling him to come out or else the Germans will destroy the village. Reluctantly, he came out from under some pumpkin plants. The wife of Kostas Demopoulos kept telling the Germans that her husband "was far away and will not be back for a few days." She was actually telling the truth because he was one of those who took the long route home after the sabotage and would not be back for 2-3 days.

After searching all the houses, they found only 6 men, including the priest. One was the 70-year-old Andreas Dupas, another was 17-year old Nikos Karahalios, 60-year old Nikos I. Souleles, 33-year old Georgios Siatos, and 38-year old Georgios K. Gournias.

The Germans freed the women and children and took the 6 men along on their way to Mazeika. As they passed by some vineyards, the soldiers went searching for grapes. But the grapes had been picked a few days earlier and there were only some remnants that had been missed by the pickers, or intentionally left behind because they were still sour. As they were searching for grapes, the teenage prisoner crawled under some vines and sat there as the soldiers collected the others and took them along. The other prisoners were alarmed, fearing that the escape of the boy would further compromise their safety. However, the soldiers were distracted and did not notice the missing boy, or just ignored it.

As they marched silently, Georgios Siatos, who was known for his humor, turned to the priest and said: "I am a cantor and you are a priest. We can perform our funeral service right now, before they kill us and throw us in a ditch." At that, the 70-year old Andreas Dupas said angrily, "Stop the jokes. I don't want to die."

When they reached Mazeika, the prisoners were taken to the town square and made to stand in front of a row of machine guns, expecting to be shot. The Germans brought over Kostas Bilitsis, who knew English, to translate. Bilitsis was the son-in-law of prisoner Nikos Souleles and knew English because he had lived in America before the war. Through the translator, the prisoners told the Germans that they are permanent residents of Aghios Nikolaos, they are not *Andartes*, and have nothing to do with the *Andartes*. "Yes, *Andartes* passed through the village, but they did not stay there." Miraculously, after a few hours, the five men were released.

* He had learned German as a prisoner of war in Germany after he was captured in Macedonia in World War I and was put to work in a German factory until the end of the war.

The Events Leading to the Holocaust

By September 1943, news was trickling in that the tide was turning against the Germans who were losing big battles in Africa and Russia. These developments, along with the collapse of Italy, encouraged people that Germany will soon be defeated. The British, on the other hand, wanted the Germans to believe that there was an imminent landing of Allied forces somewhere in the Peloponnese in order to relieve the pressure on the Russians. For this reason, they were pressuring the Resistance to harass the Germans as much as possible.

Through their spy network, the Germans knew that Kalavryta was a hotbed of resistance and sent a column of soldiers to suppress it. On October 15, 1943, a company of 97 soldiers left the coastal town of Eghion and headed towards Kerpini, a small village near Kalavryta. The Resistance had its own intelligence network and decided to set a trap for the Germans near the village of Rogoi. On October 17, a serious battle took place lasting almost 24 hours and ended when the Germans ran out of ammunition and surrendered. Among those who surrendered was their commanding officer, Captain Schober. There were 4 dead Germans, 4 seriously wounded, and only 11 managed to escape to go back to their base and deliver the bad news. The *Andartes* had only 9 dead [Meyer, p. 256]. Of the German prisoners, 82 were brought to Kalavryta where they spent the evening in the Elementary School building, and on the next day they were taken to Mazeika, which was more remote. One of the wounded soldiers could not walk and was left in Kerpini. Three other wounded prisoners were taken to the hospital in Kalavryta. Unfortunately, these wounded prisoners were forcibly taken from the hospital and killed by an *Andarte* doctor who happened to be a relative of the young boy, Dino Pavlopoulos, who had been hanged a few weeks earlier by the Germans. The other doctors in the hospital protested this atrocity but the *Andarte* overruled them. The bodies of the three dead German soldiers were dumped in a well, but later retrieved and buried in a lime pit to make their discovery more difficult.*

Over the next few weeks, attempts were made to free the prisoners who were in Mazeika. The commander of the German forces in Greece, Gen. Hellmuth Felmy, asked the Metropolitan of Kalavryta and Eghion, later Archbishop of Greece, Theoklitos, to negotiate their release. The bishop refused and assigned one of his priests, Konstantinos Chronis, as the negotiator. Gen. Felmy threatened to destroy the Province of Kalavryta if the prisoners were not released. One of the problems was that the *Andartes* were asking to exchange 50 Greek hostages for every German prisoner. This number was used because the German rule at the time was to execute 50 Greek hostages for every dead German soldier. At that time it is estimated that the Germans were holding about 4,000 hostages throughout the Peloponnese. The *Andartes* also demanded the freedom of high-level KKE members who had been imprisoned in Germany and some who had already been executed. Meanwhile, at the end of November of 1943, the Germans executed 118 civilian hostages at Monodendri, near Sparta, as a reprisal for another surprise attack by the

* In recent years(KalavrytaNews.com, 2014/12/11) relatives of the doctor Andreas Pavlopoulos who is blamed for the death of the prisoners insist that the doctor had been ordered by OPLA to hand the prisoners over to them. Also, Filio Gourzi, a woman who was 15 at the time and a member of EPON, the communist youth organization, claims that the doctor is innocent because she remembers OPLA members bragging and demonstrating how they butchered the wounded German soldiers.

Andartes where 4 German soldiers were killed. In addition, German planes bombed the ELAS headquarters in Visoka, a village near Kalavryta. These events precipitated the collapse of the negotiations.

According to official German documents, "Operation Kalavryta," *UNTERNEHMEN KALAWRYTA*, was put into effect in the beginning of December 1943. Coordinated German units left their bases in Megalopoli-Tripoli, Patra, Eghion, and Argos, organized in company-sized units for the operation against the "gangs" and for the search and recovery of the prisoners. Their mission was to encircle the mountainous area around Kalavryta, clear it from *Andartes*, free the prisoners who had been lost in the battle of Kerpini, and search for any weapons and propaganda materials. In that operation, SS units, acting independently, also participated, without reporting to the regular army.

The German units were split in 3 groups: one was headed to the Kerpini-Zahlorou-Rogoi region, led by the new commander, Maj. Ebersberger. Another, led by Captain Gnass moved towards the east side of Helmos to prevent the *Andartes* from escaping towards Korinthos. And the third, led by Major Kockert, passed through Mazeika and went directly to Mazi searching for the prisoners.

On December 5, the column from the East and headed towards Mazeika encountered minor resistance in Pangrati, where one German was killed and one was wounded. As reprisals, most houses in Pangrati were destroyed and all the men who had not ran away and were caught there were executed.

The *Andartes* guarding the prisoners in Mazeika panicked when they heard that the Germans were only an hour or two away. Those guarding the prisoners, first took them westward, then turned east, passed through the village of Planitero, and eventually ended up at the very remote village of Mazi that is at high altitude, surrounded by a dense pine forest and covered by snow most of the winter months. From there, on the afternoon of December 7, the prisoners were taken to a nearby remote location, over a cliff, and in the darkness, tied with ropes, the semi-naked prisoners were pushed into the abyss below.

In 1982, the local newspaper, **Phoni ton Kalavryton (Voice of Kalavryta)**, ran a number of articles regarding the details of this massacre. Also, some of the documents in the **Holocaust Archives** have been published on the website **www.KalavrytaNews.com**. One of the documents is an interview of Andreas Asimakopoulos, the leader of the execution squad. He describes the chaotic situation and the confusing orders he had received regarding the fate of the prisoners. He describes how the difficulties of securing all those prisoners with only 11 *Andartes*, and the lack of bullets forced the *Andartes* to push the prisoners off the cliff instead of shooting them. He also said that on the following day he was in Mazi where he almost came face to face with Greek collaborators and Germans soldiers who were searching for the prisoners. He was able to escape and end up at the village of Soudena, several hours hiking distance. There he met a British major with a few soldiers who ordered him to kill a German prisoner who had escaped prior to the execution at the cliff and who also ended up at Soudena.

At first Asimakopoulos could not recall the date of the execution but he admitted it must have been December 7 because when he arrived in Soudena on the day following the executions he saw the burning of the village of Rogoi, which took place on December 8* .

In a letter to the same newspaper (August 1999), the teacher Georgios Tsamis, who, as a 15-year old, had been forcibly taken by the Germans to help retrieve the dead bodies from the gorge, refutes some important details in the Asimakopoulos interview. He asserts that the prisoners in Mazeika were 96. Of those 94 arrived at Mazi on December 6, 1943, accompanied by 7 *Andartes* (one prisoner was too sick to travel and was left behind, and another escaped in the forest near Mazi). The execution took place on 7 December 1943, which was the day the Germans arrived in Mazeika and learned that the prisoners had been moved to Mazi. In Mazeika the Germans found the prisoner who was sick with malaria and had been forgotten behind at the house where he had been staying. Another prisoner survived the execution and walked down to Planitero where a doctor treated his wounds. This wounded prisoner continued walking towards Mazeika and on the way he met the German search party. He told them how and where the prisoners were executed. The Germans arrived at Mazi on December 8 and learned that the prisoners had passed through there. The village was burned and 4 men who were found there were executed. Afterwards they also burned down Planitero and all houses in Mazeika, except the neighborhood where the sick prisoner had stayed. A second prisoner, who survived the execution, walked away from the gorge and met the Germans at Mazi, where he substantiated the information given by the other survivor. Tsamis also refutes the involvement of the British in executing the German soldier in Soudena, since the British officer was actually hiding in the villa near Mazi belonging to the Brown family, which was too far from Soudena.

The three survivors informed the Germans about the good treatment they received by the people of Mazeika. This information saved Mazeika from total destruction. In Mazeika, the Germans learned where to find the bodies of their dead comrades, as they could easily see the cir-

* The date for the execution of the prisoners and when the Germans found out about it is significant because many leftist writers insist that the Germans committed the Holocaust before they even knew the fate of the prisoners. The reason for this is an attempt to absolve the *Andartes* of any responsibility for the Holocaust of Kalavryta. These writers (e.g., Pericles Rodakis, and others) insist that the Germans did not care one way or the other about the fate of their prisoners, and probably wanted them dead because they brought shame to the Wehrmacht. They also claim that probably it was the British liaison officers who ordered the killing of the prisoners. The military commander, Michos, absolves himself by claiming that his signature on the order to execute the Germans was forged. Rodakis also claimed that the victims in Kalavryta are partly at fault because they did not run to hide in the mountains, as the *Andartes* had advised them but listened to the British agents who were collaborating with the Germans. The relatives of the victims almost lynched him when he visited Kalavryta after the publication of his book. As for the responsibility of British agents, in an interview (**Foni ton Kalavryton**, 3 March 1975) of Antony Andrews who was one of the British liaison officers in the area in late 1943, stated: *"We were aware that ELAS was holding German prisoners captured at Kerpini... I am certain that there was no involvement by us in the negotiations. I cannot imagine that the Allied Mission could stop the evacuation of Kalavryta, even if it wished to do that. As for arming the Andartes, we had no weapon supplies in the area to do that. Even if Cairo was interested in dropping supplies, there were too many Germans in the area to make it possible... As for us having a say in the execution of the prisoners, it is totally false. I am convinced that ELAS executed the prisoners because it did not want the responsibility to care for them. The execution of the prisoners served no conceivable British interest. I personally interviewed some of the prisoners. We were not informed about the negotiations regarding the prisoner exchange and naturally we did not know in advance about the execution. We had not received any direction about this from Cairo.... Our general position at that time was to avoid incidents that would provoke the Germans to commit reprisals... Once the prisoners were killed, there was no hope in avoiding severe reprisals, and neither us or ELAS had the means to prevent them"*

cling vultures and buzzards in the forest of Helmos at the place called Maghero. The team of soldiers searching for the prisoners returned to Mazeika before the end of the day. On December 11, another team undertook the search for the dead bodies. It gathered up several local men, headed by Dr. Karkoulas, to help in the search for the prisoners. On 12-12-1943, the search party located the exact spot of the dead prisoners, and then executed 10 of the 12 local guides before leaving for Mazeika. They did not kill Dr. Karkoulas, and another one escaped by jumping down a steep cliff*.

On December 19, another German unit of 700 soldiers arrived in Mazeika for the unpleasant task of recovering the dead from the gorge. It gathered up a group of locals and pack animals from various villages to retrieve the bodies and transport them down to a location where military trucks could be used. At that time, motor vehicles could only go up to the location called *Vrahos*, 2-3 km below Planitero. From there, the bodies were loaded on trucks and were sent to Tripoli where they were buried.†

From the moment they learned about the killing of their dead comrades on December 8, the Germans in Kalavryta became infuriated with the atrocity that had been committed. On the following days, groups of German soldiers went through the villages killing, looting and burning. On 12-12-1943 one group left the village of Arbouna and was approaching Aghios Nikolaos. Knowing what happened to the other villages, the residents expected the certain destruction of their village. All the men ran to hide in the forest, except for Kostas G. Demopoulos, who spoke German and decided to sacrifice himself in an effort to save the village. He gathered up a few women and children and, with a raised white flag went to meet the Germans at the edge of the village, just below the village cemetery. My brother Andrew, who was nearly 11 years old then, participated in this procession and remembers the events very vividly. The Germans split into two groups, with one proceeding to the neighboring village of Turlada. Kostas Demopoulos tried to convince the Germans that our village had nothing to do with the *Andartes*, or with those who murdered the prisoners. The Germans were very cold and unemotional, and did not seem to be paying attention to what he was saying. The group in Turlada had already begun torching homes at the leading edge of the village. Then, miraculously, the leader of the group in Aghios Nikolaos shot two flares in the air, which seemed to be the signal to stop the burning. Indeed, he proceeded to lead his men out of the village and towards their base in Mazeika. The group in Turlada burned only three homes and stopped. Those Germans who were leaving Aghios Nikolaos, on their way out noticed some grazing cattle at the edge of the village, gathered them up and took them along. The commander reported to his superiors that Aghios Nikolaos, Turlada, and some other villages were destroyed. This was not true and it shows that there were exceptions to the ruthlessness of German soldiers. (Meyer, p. 403)

* Karkoulas, a physician had been educated in Germany and practiced medicine in Mazeika. He was later executed by the *Andartes* because they thought he was much too helpful to the enemy. He was the acting mayor of the town who organized a committee to welcome the Germans into the town by carrying white flags of submission, and later, enthusiastically helped the enemy to find the bodies in the gorge. He was also accused by the other survivor that when the Germans released Karkoulas, he just walked off and would not hear the pleas of his fellow neighbors begging him to intervene on their behalf when they were about to be executed.

† About 10 years later, the remains of the prisoners were removed and taken to the German Cemetery at Dionysos, near Athens, for their final resting place.

The Holocaust

The order for the complete destruction of Kalavryta and the execution of the adult male population was given by Gen. Karl von Le Suire, commander of the Peloponnese and of the 117th Jäger Division, to Col. Woelfinger, who was based in Patra. General Felmy, who was theoretically ranked above Le Suire, was opposed to reprisals against civilians but at this time he was not in Greece. Woelfinger, on his way to Kalavryta had an automobile accident and was replaced by the most senior commander, Maj. Hans Ebersberger based in Eghion. Ebersberger was the one who had originally sent Captain Schober and the lost unit on its search and destroy mission. In his response, years later when he was interrogated at the Nuremberg Trials, Woelfinger described Ebersberger as *"...a morose and hard-nose officer who blindly obeyed orders without evaluating them himself."* As for the operation itself, Woelfinger testified at Nuremberg: *"When on December 8 I was informed about the message from Le Suire, I was with Maj. Ebersberger and my Adjutant Pichler. In the presence of both of them I stated that I refuse to execute the order in its present form since I was not able to justify it."* A wireless operator remembered that when someone asked Le Suire why the reprisals must be carried out to this extent, he replied, *"What should I tell the mothers and wives who ask me: General, what are you going to do to stop these things from happening again and how are you going to punish the perpetrators?"* (Meyer, p. 366)

With Ebersberger in charge, on December 8, the units that had left Eghion arrived in Kerpini. After eating and entertaining themselves, they loaded pack animals with loot and pretended to leave. Suddenly, they returned and encircled the village, burned all its houses, assembled all men, and promptly executed 42 unarmed and innocent villagers.

On the next day, they encircled the nearby village of Rogoi, shot some shepherds who were taking their sheep out for grazing, and all the men they caught were brought to the village church. They killed a few inside the church and took three or four at a time outside to the churchyard where they shot them. The total number of dead was 61, and 5 were seriously wounded. Before leaving, they burned all homes and the church.

On that same day, they went to the village of Zahlorou, which is located near the bottom of the cliff where the monastery Mega Spoleon is perched. Most of the men had ran away but they gathered up all the men they found and took them to the riverbank. Some villagers jumped in the frigid waters of the river and escaped. The rest were mowed down by machine guns. The total number of dead was 18.

Some of the executioners from the same unit climbed up to the Mega Spoleon Monastery and killed all the monks they could find, and pitched them over a steep cliff. A few minutes later, as these executioners were leaving, they met a monk and a group of workers returning from the monastery farm and who were unaware of what had just happened. They too were executed. The total number of dead at the monastery reached 21.

On the following day, December 9, the German execution squads continued towards Kalavryta, killing and burning whoever and whatever was on their way. They annihilated the vil-

lages of Souvardo and Vrahni. They collected flocks of sheep, pigs and cows from farms and villages and burned all homes.

Everything was now in place for the devastating massacre that had been planned for Monday, December 13, 1943. The residents of Kalavryta courteously welcomed the Germans, who seemed to be angry and mean. They burned the homes of families that had sons in the Resistance. They also burned the venerable Helmos Hotel, and then ordered a curfew, preventing everyone from leaving the town. They asked for information regarding the prisoners they had lost at Kerpini and asked about the injured. The Kalavrytans informed them that the prisoners had been taken by the *Andartes* to the mountains, and the injured died of their wounds and were buried honorably by the residents.

On December 11, the Nazis demanded an autopsy on the bodies of those three buried in the lime pit in Kalavryta. They seemed to have serious doubts about the veracity of the account of their death. Three German doctors and two Greek doctors conducted the autopsy. The report stated that it was "death by a blunt implement," i.e., by axe or knife and not by battle wounds. The Germans became furious. They conducted another funeral for the reburial of the three, with funeral speeches and all. The Kalavrytans were by now numb because they knew the Germans did not believe them and that the time for retribution due to the mindless deeds of the *Andartes* was approaching. That evening, the Germans called many residents and interrogated them for hours. They wanted to know much more about the *Andartes*. From the questions asked, it seemed they were well informed about the sympathetic feelings of the residents towards the *Andartes*.

Sunday, December 12th was a very cold day in temperature and in the feelings between the citizens and the enemy. The soldiers stopped talking and circulated in the city, dashing in and out of neighborhoods with their devilish motorcycles, looting homes under the pretext of investigating. They plundered practically every house.

Early in the morning of December 13th, 1943, the church bells were constantly ringing. The terrified citizens were asking, "*Why are the bells ringing?*" Soon enough the soldiers gave the answer, ordering everyone to assemble at the schoolhouse, and every man to bring along a blanket and a day's food. It appears that the blanket and food was a diversion to mislead everyone to believe that the men would be laboring to repair the damaged roads and to allay any suspicion about their imminent execution.

At about 9:30 in the morning, everyone was at the schoolhouse. Women and children were locked in three rooms. All males from ages 15 to 65 were lined up by twos and led to Kappi's field, a 10-minute walk to an amphitheater-like field on the hillside, with a view of the town below. The selection was made by appearance of the victims. Among the men was a 12-year old, a 13-year old, a 14-year old, and eleven were 15-year old children. (Meyer, p. 445)

At about 10:30, soldiers with machine guns who appeared from behind the ridge encircled the two lines of men and boys. The younger boys looked in utter terror at their fathers. Who could possibly imagine what would happen next?

Meanwhile, other Nazis down in the town were burning all the homes, after first removing valuables and loading them on the train and on trucks. For these jobs, the Germans used some laborers they had found working on farms. Later, after they had finished loading the loot, they had the village men and boys dig their own graves on a farm below the monastery of Aghia Lavra. The Germans then killed them all, and dumped the bodies into the graves the victims had dug up and must have known that they were for themselves.

Up on the hillside, the Kalavrytans saw their own homes on fire. Machine guns were pointed at them. They asked the German officer in charge, using the High School French teacher as interpreter, "Did you bring us here to kill us?" And the officer replied, "No, on my military honor, I give you my word."

The men were not convinced. Some of them gathered around and proposed that everyone rush the gunners, or run in different directions to escape, since they would be killed in any case. But many screamed, "*No, because if we do that, they will kill the women and children who are locked in the schoolhouse.*" This shows how remarkably well planned was the operation to exterminate the Kalavrytans.

A few minutes later, at 12:15, two flares went up in the air, giving the signal for the execution. The machine guns started rattling away. The victims began hurling curses at their executioners. Dr. Hampsas yelled, "*Fellow patriots, we are dying bravely and proudly. Long live Greece!*" A mass of hundreds of men and children fell to the ground. Within a few minutes, all was quiet. Then, a 14-year old boy, Dinos Demopoulos, who was still alive, rose up and yelled, "I want to live, I am a student, don't kill me." The machine gun was turned on him and finished him off.

To make sure there were no survivors, the Nazi soldiers stepped over the dead bodies and the flowing blood to shoot everyone in the head with their pistols. After this macabre operation, the Nazis lined up and marched away.

Before departing from Kalavryta, they went out to the historic monastery of Aghia Lavra, where the banner of the Greek Revolution was kept. The Abbot of the monastery and most monks hid in the nearby-forested hills, taking along many of the invaluable treasures and heirlooms. They left behind only one guard and four monks, who were killed under the historic sycamore tree of the monastery. One of the dead monks, Neofitos Nikolaos Arfanis, was my father's first cousin. Afterwards, the Nazis torched the monastery but, miraculously, the ancient church survived. On their way to Patra, the Germans stopped at the large village of Vissoka and burned down whatever still remained.

Some men survived at the site of the massacre in Kalavryta because they pretended to be dead when other dead bodies covered them and blood ran over them. One survivor claimed later that he survived because he had his watch with him and his executioner was distracted while retrieving the watch and forgot to shoot him on the head. However, several had serious wounds and died later from lack of care. Thirteen men survived as eyewitnesses, among them Takis Spiliopoulos, who later became Mayor of Kalavryta and testified as a witness at the war crimes trials in Nuremberg.

How Many Were Executed in Kalavryta

There is a lot of controversy regarding the number of dead in Kalavryta. The most often stated number is 1300 but it is probably an exaggeration, unless it includes all those who died in the Province throughout the 1-year period of the German occupation. For this operation, the German military documents of the 14th of December 1943, from the official report state: *“Continuing the reprisal measures in the region of Kalavryta, the town of Mazeika and two monasteries were destroyed. The battle units are now on their way back to their bases. In total, during the period of reprisals, 24 villages and 3 monasteries were destroyed, and 696 Greeks were shot.”*

At the Nuremberg trials in 1947, Gen. Felmy, who was the commanding officer of German forces in Southern Greece, when questioned about the number of executed civilians as part of Operation Kalavryta, responded: *“...As shown in the final operations report for the actions of the 117th Jager Division, executed and shot were 696 Greeks, and the total for the whole Province of Kalavryta is about 800 Greeks.”* Further, he admitted that *“...the ratio of 10:1 was disproportionate. On the other hand, I accept that these people are too many, and unrelated to the events...”* (Phoni ton Kalavryton, Dec. 2005)

Among the victims were many visitors from neighboring villages who happened to be in Kalavryta for business. These included civil servants working for various governmental jobs, and shepherds who were found grazing their flocks in the surrounding area, as well as 18 mine workers from Euboea who were employed in the lignite mines of Kalavryta (one of the 18 survived).

Meyer concludes that between the 10th and 14th of December in Kalavryta a total of 487 were executed. (Meyer, p. 446). However, he has a footnote in his book stating that after publication of the book, the Kalavrytan researcher, Yota Konstantopoulou, gave him a list of names of 497 dead.

Women and Children

While the execution of the men and boys was taking place, the women and younger children were packed in the schoolhouse. From there they could see their burning homes but had no idea about what happened on the hillside above the town. Then they noticed smoke coming up from the ground floor of the school and from the houses next to it. Panicked, they thought that they were about to be burned alive, and started to break windows in order to jump from the second floor. Others were pushing against the doors to open them up to get out from the building. Finally, the front door opened, and in the panic, some were trampled by those in the back. One woman jumped from the window and broke her leg. When the women finally were outside and started looking for their husbands, fathers, and sons, they were nowhere to be found. A short while later, a woman screamed out, *“Oh miserable women, the men are all gone, they were killed at Kappi’s Field.”*

When the women realized what happened, they ran, stepping on the bloodied path made by the departing soldiers, and searched to find their loved ones. It was about to get dark. Up on that mountain, in December, it gets very cold and the ground freezes. Because all the tools had

burned with the houses, it was impossible to bury the dead. But the women worried that the hungry dogs and wild animals would eat the dead bodies. For that reason, they began to cover the bodies with the blankets that the victims had taken with them, and on top of the blankets they put stones to protect their dead loved ones. Among the dead, some women had their husband, father, brothers, and, in some cases, several sons.

Post Mortem

Dimitris Kaldiris, whose father was one of the victims, was at the time an elementary school student. After his Elementary and High School education in Kalavryta, he entered the University of Athens where he studied Archaeology, History, Theology, and Law, in that order. Later he became a High School Principal, and also wrote several books about the events, including **The Drama of Kalavryta**, from which I translate a few paragraphs regarding the aftereffects of the Holocaust:

“The children were hungry and were asking for food. But where could they find food to steady their trembling legs? Three of them went to their home, they saw it was burned and perched inside the chicken coop in their yard, and waited for their mother who went to search for their father at the place of execution.

When she recognized her dead husband, she wrapped him under a blanket and left. She took with her that piece of bread the poor man had taken with him believing that he was going to be on the road for a while and then return home. When the mother returned to the house, the orphaned kids jumped out of the coop, pulled at her skirt and asked for food. Then, with a knotted heart, she took out the red and blood-soaked bread with their father’s blood, cleaned off some of the blood, and offered that bread to her children, like communion, to abate their hunger...

Early in the morning on the following day, at Kappi’s field, the sound was like a humming chorus of an ancient Greek tragedy, an indescribable lamentation, a choking, whirring sound, made by the crying of hundreds of women. Their singing, or rather the mumbling of dirges and lamentations, sounded like a painful symphony that only a Beethoven could compose.

The beautiful town of Kalavryta was now a pile of ruins. It looked sadly at the unburied bodies of the victims. Long lines of large homes that once made the city, were no longer there. In their place were torched wooden beams, smudged walls of stone with protruding burned beams and iron bars, window remnants, and hovering above all was a white fog...

Where could the poor and weak women find the energy to bury their dead? How could they transport them to the cemetery? With what tools could they dig the graves to bury them? At this difficult time, their belief in God gave them courage and strength. After recognizing a dead loved one, the woman pulled him a little and begged for help. The old men who survived, would put the bodies on a wooden ladder and pile them up at the cemetery. The women who had one dead close relative wrapped him with a blanket and dragged him. They helped each other for the burial. The path from the Execution to the Cemetery was red, soaked with blood. Some, overwhelmed with emotion and confused, took whomever they found and started dragging, thinking that he was a loved one. When, along the way, the woman came to her senses, bent over the

face of the dead man and was speechless when she realized that it was not her loved one, but somebody else.

There were cases where a woman had to collect dismembered legs, arms, and spilled brains to make the skeleton of her loved one's face, which was deformed and unrecognizable..."

The burial of the dead occupied the women for the next few days. The very cold winter temperatures and the lack of tools complicated the task. Shovels and other tools had burned when the homes were burned. It took about 40 days to bury all the dead well enough to protect them from the animals. It was also necessary to bury those who had no relatives in Kalavryta to look after them.

For the survivors, the conditions were tragic. There were no clothes to change those that were bloodied, and no food for them and the children who were hungry. The wounded were without medical care. The women gathered up any scraps of sheet metal that survived the fire to cover a corner inside their burned and smudged stone walls to huddle their kids and themselves. Others moved inside chicken coops and storage sheds.

The first aid came from volunteers from the surrounding villages. They brought some bread, milk, raisins, cheese, a blanket, and whatever had survived in their own houses, because their villages had also been pillaged.

Three days later, 16 December 1943, first aid came from the Red Cross. The subsequent Mayor of Kalavryta, Takis Georgakopoulos, happened to arrive at Diakofto by train from Athens on the day of the Holocaust and learned the news from a train employee. He left immediately for Patra, where he found the Prefect of Achaia and together they requested from the German authorities permission to take basic necessities to Kalavryta. They also found a car on which they put up a white flag, and with some Red Cross volunteers arrived in Kalavryta where they witnessed the immensity of the tragedy.

The Germans appeared again in the area of Kalavryta for another raid on Good Friday of 1944. The residents dropped the church services and ran for the mountains. When the Germans arrived in Kalavryta, they burned the Red Cross car that had brought the emergency food, and dug into the ruins and grabbed whatever had survived, even the gifts from the Red Cross. They took whatever animals they found and went up into the mountains to find the hidden residents. Whomever they found, they shot on the spot. After searching the mountains for several days, killed everyone in sight and then left. In July, they came for their last raid, and behaved with the same brutality as before: killing humans and looting everything they could carry away.

It does not take much imagination to visualize the effects of the Holocaust on Kalavryta's surviving women and children. It was a community without men, without houses, without clothes, heat, or food. Kalavryta is at high altitude, and heavy winter was just ahead. The enormous strength and determination shown by these women and children made it possible for them to survive. Against all odds, eventually the small town slowly came back to life.

The Last German Raid

The last raid on the villages of northern Peloponnese took place in July and early August of 1944 and was supported by members the "Security Battalions." It was intended to destroy the thriving Resistance between the twin mountains of Helmos and Ziria. However, this mission ended in a German disaster at the so-called battle of Stymfalia, where hundreds of German soldiers died and many were captured as prisoners. From these prisoners, 27 were brought to Aghios Nikolaos and held in the Old Church. Then, one day, some young *Andartes* (members of OPLA) took the stripped-naked prisoners, tied them with ropes, and marched them up the mountain. When the prisoners came to the ridge on top of the mountain and saw the forest beyond, they realized that they were being led to their deaths. They sat down, refusing to go any further. To force them to go on, the guards cut thorny branches that grow in the area, and started whipping the naked prisoners, as described later by a bragging executioner .

Eventually they reached a densely forested area, near the plateau of Arahova, where the prisoners were shot. Knowing what had occurred in Kalavryta, the residents of Aghios Nikolaos and of the nearby villages became deathly afraid of the consequences if the Germans were to discover the bodies. Some courageous villagers went and burned the bodies in an effort to eliminate any trace of the evidence and to stop vultures and buzzards from circling above. Fortunately, a day or two later, a strong rain washed out the ashes and other remnants and eliminated the putid smell of flesh and bones.

As expected, a few days later, on the 23rd of July, several German units came from different directions searching for the prisoners. Some German soldiers came from Tripoli and appeared at the ridge on "Paliopyrgos," below Turlada, and started shooting at the farmers working on their farms next to the hillside. Among the victims was Panagiotis Demopoulos (Viglas) from the village of Aghios Nikolaos. The same Germans killed two men from Turlada, Georgios Galanis who was shot on the spot and Thanasis Golfopoulos who was taken along but was shot when he tried to escape. My father was working on his farm, but when he heard the first shot, he dived into a water ditch and survived.

When the Germans reached Aghios Nikolaos, they found no one except Asimakis Dupas, a mentally handicapped man. They took him along to use him as a guinea pig. In the house of the beekeeper Nikos Gournias (Theotokis), they found big vats of honey. To make sure it was not poisoned, they fed some to Asimakis. When they saw it was safe, they ate some and loaded the rest on mules to take along. Asimakis later kept saying: *"The Germans soldiers are good boys. They gave me lots of honey to eat."*

Another German unit came from Korinthos down the mountains to Planitero, and continued to the water mills and then headed for Aghios Nikolaos. They had with them Greek guides in German uniforms who knew the area well. They bypassed the village and climbed the mountains above. Hidden in the mountains, they found the young shepherd, Athanasios Ghikas, and killed him.

I remember that on this day we were on another mountain above the village. It was dusk and we saw fires and smoke in the distant village of Pangrati, where homes, and just threshed

wheat, were burning. On the following day, we saw soldiers in uniform coming up where we were, so we went further and ran down into a gorge to hide. Eventually we went to hide near the little "Church of Christ," across from Turlada. Several men from our village climbed down into the deep ravine where they hid in a cave.

My brother Andrew, who was 11, and our 16 year-old neighbor, Theodore Demopoulos (who later immigrated to the USA and became Dr. Theodore Demas and lived in Florida) walked several miles downstream and hid in the wooded hillside called "Dendra." From there they had a clear view of the road going from Mazeika to Aghios Nikolaos and they could see soldiers with pack animals loaded with loot from homes in Aghios Nikolaos. They also could hear the soldiers swearing and speaking perfectly the local Greek vernacular, which means they were probably collaborators from our area. Three days passed and the two boys were very hungry so they decided to hike back upstream. They eventually found other men from the village in a cave who were also hungry. Somebody there noticed that in the next village over, smoke was rising from a baker's oven. A daring teenager, Nikos Karahalios, decided to go on a mission to get some bread. He came back with some half-baked loaves of bread wrapped in his jacket. This bread was a lifesaver for these men.

The members of the German search party seemed to be well informed that their comrades had been killed in a place called "Arahova" and were asking for directions and information where to find them. They interrogated local people (see the picture in the last page) to get information and went to the Arahova plateau to search but could not locate the exact place. Fortunately, one of the shepherds thought up the idea that there is a village near Eghion called Arahova and tried to convince the Germans that the place they were looking for was the one near Eghion. Probably that confused the searchers enough to divert their attention and leave our area. Also, at this time the Germans were withdrawing from the Peloponnese and had no time to do a thorough search.

This was the last time Germans appeared in our area and by the end of September they had left the Peloponnese. The German occupation in our area lasted almost a year, but it felt like centuries because the destruction left behind was horrendous.

Their last appearance happened a few days before the great holy day of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary on August 15, and the villagers went to church to pray and thank the Virgin Mary for saving them, and hoped not to see them ever again.

Exactly one year later, the young OPLA leader of the execution squad was cutting a tree near the spot where he had executed the young German soldiers. The tree fell and bounced back and pinned him against another tree. His funeral was on the afternoon of the of August 15, a holiday. During the burial at the cemetery, his mother was screaming, "Oh, my Yorgo, the Germans killed you!"

The location in the forest where the 27 were executed is now known as "Where the Germans Were Killed." Unfortunately, after the commission of so many atrocities during that period of time, this crime of the murder of 27 human beings is not very well known beyond the 3 villages bordering this area, and it is not mentioned by any sources.

The German Withdrawal

The order for the German withdrawal came on August 23, 1944. The German plus their Bulgarian allied forces were enormous* :

German Infantry was 250,000, Bulgarian Infantry was 54,000.

German Navy was 28,000, there was 1 division of air force troops, 2 divisions of air transport and about 1,000 civilian support. About 23,000 troops were trapped in the Greek islands and were captured by the British. Trapped in the Greek islands were also about 10,000 Italians.

Military Losses in the Peloponnese[†]

The 68th German Army lost in the 10 months of occupation (September 1943 to June 1944) lost 604 dead, 497 wounded and 447 lost.

ELAS lost 2,046 dead, 700 wounded, and about 5,000 captured

How the German Participants Justify their Actions

For various reasons, none of the participants who committed these hideous crimes in the area of Kalavryta was convicted by a court. In 1968, the Munich Court investigated and charged 20 people for offenses related to the Holocaust of Kalavryta. But the West German court found that *“at the time of the commission of these crimes, the execution of civilians and hostages was not against any existing law... Furthermore, arbitrarily selecting victims and punishing them for the deeds of others, is not condemned by International Law. The Hague Conventions do not explicitly forbid it!”*

Probably one of the reasons is the confusion of the names of those responsible. Until the publication of Meyer's book, everyone in Kalavryta claimed that the executioner was “Tenner.” Meyer clarified that the true name of Tenner was Konrad Dhonert and he was an interpreter with the rank of corporal. He participated in interrogations and probably tortured the victims but he was not the man responsible for the decisions or the actual execution. The man who gave the order was Le Suire who was actually present in Mazeika and Kalavryta at that time. The man who was the on site supervising the operation was Maj. Hans Ebersberger, and the leader of the execution squad was SS 2nd lieutenant Willibald Akamphuber. For some reason, Dhonert, Ebersberger, and Akamphuber were all merged in the character of “Tenner.”

Below are some of the main characters, in addition to Hitler, who are responsible for the Holocaust of Kalavryta:

Wilhelm Spidel (1895-1970) was then the highest-ranking officer in Greece but was not accused as being directly involved. He was convicted in 1948 by the American tribunal in Nuremberg to 20 years in prison for other crimes but was released in 1951.

* Meyer, p.587

† Meyer, p. 589

Karl von Le Suire (1898-1945) was then commanding the 117th Jager Division and issued the order for UNTERNEHMEN KALAWRYTA (Operation Kalavryta), spelling out the details and watching over the operation. He died as a prisoner of war in Stalingrad.

Hellmuth Felmy (1885-1965) was the commander of the forces in Attica and the Peloponnese, but at that time he was on leave and had no direct responsibility for the reprisals in Kalavryta. However, he was convicted in 1948 by the American military tribunal for other crimes in Greece to serve 12 years in prison. He was pardoned in 1951.

Julius Woelfinger was a Lieutenant Colonel for infantry, based in Patra. He was in Greece for about a year and then was transferred to the Eastern Front. Because of an automobile accident, he did not participate in the reprisals so he was found innocent and returned to active duty in the army of West Germany.

Hans Ebersberger was an army Major who took over as the commanding officer Operation Kalavryta when Woelfinger was injured. Woelfinger accused him at the trials as being *"...excessively zealous... a morose and hard-nose officer who blindly obeyed orders without evaluating them himself."* He was later killed in the Russian Front.

Konrad Dohners (1914-1979) served as interpreter because he knew Greek. He also served in the military intelligence, possibly because of his language skills. In Kalavryta he was known as "Executioner Tenner" because, as an interpreter, he was very visible and for a long time he was thought to have commanded the execution squad. However, the evidence presented by historian Hermann Frank Meyer eliminates him as the executioner. After Greece, he served in the Eastern Front. Unfortunately his tracks were lost because he hid in Dresden of East Germany until his death.

Willibald Akamphuber(1905-1972) was an SS 2nd lieutenant who commanded the Execution Squad in Kalavryta. Until the publication of Herman Frank Meyer's book he was confused with the interpreter Konrad Dohnert. Born in Austria, he became an early follower of Hitler and the Nazi party. For his Nazi terrorist activities in Austria, he was convicted to serve time in jail but was released when Germany took over Austria. He immediately joined the German army and was assigned to the SS and put in charge of a "Disciplinary Unit" which was staffed with convicted criminals whose main job was to execute hostages in captured territories. In 1943 he served in the 117th Jager Division in the Peloponnese and was known as "Al Capone." He survived the war and returned to Austria where he kept a low profile. There is photograph of him in 1959 celebrating in a pub with other SS cronies. Because of the confusion with Dohnert, he was never accused by Greek authorities for committing atrocities.

A German soldier who participated in the massacre was asked many years later, *"How did you feel at the time you were doing this terrible crime?"* He answered: *"I was 20 years old then. I believed that by killing others, I would save myself. We all believed then that by doing these things we would stay alive while in Greece. We had orders to take severe measures in order to crush any resistance, and win the war. Now that I am older, I realize we committed heinous crimes. I disapprove of it and I want to forget it. It was indeed a big mistake, an irreversible one. I ask for forgiveness from all Greeks for what I did as a soldier, under orders, and I curse the fate*

that sent me to those places. Now I admire the Greeks and I honor them, because they are indeed a glorious and proud race." (Phoni ton Kalavryton, March 1982)

Some Persistent Myths

1. The number of executed Men. For many years there were several numbers that circulated ranging from 500 to 1500, but the most persistent was 1300. Some sources arbitrarily justified it claiming that it was the 13th of December of 1943 at 1300 hours and there were 13 survivors, therefore it must be 1300 executed men. This number was brought up by the prosecution against Felmy but his attorneys disputed it on the basis that the census of 1940 had counted only 1233 men in Kalavryta. Subtracting the 50 men of ELAS and some who had left for other villages, the available pool of men was less than 1200. After a thorough analysis by Meyer and others, the number of dead between December 10 and 14 was less than 500 and most likely it was 497. (Meyer, p. 446)

2. The song "Lili Marleen." Some witnesses claimed that the Germans left the site of the execution singing the song "Lili Marleen," which was very popular during the war years. Another author claimed that it was the British song "Heidi Heido." Meyer interviewed many soldiers who said that they never sang during military operations. They only sang in parades. In addition, the music of "Lili Marleen" is not compatible with marching.

3. The Holocaust was not a reprisal but had been decided a priori. It is claimed by many leftist and Communist authors that the Holocaust was not a reprisal for the killing of the German prisoners. Rather the Germans had decided to destroy Kalavryta before they even knew about the execution of their prisoners. They also claim that if the Germans wanted to save their prisoners, they could have gone to Mazeika to save them. The prisoners were there roaming freely for 6 weeks. But because they considered these prisoners cowards and because many of them were Alsations, they abandoned them. It turns out, there were only 7 Alsations and the Germans considered every soldier German without showing any preferences. This myth is propagated by leftists in order to absolve ELAS and OPLA of any responsibility for the Holocaust.

4. The Good Austrian Soldier. There is a myth that the women and children would have been burned alive inside the schoolhouse if it was not for the "Good Austrian" soldier who opened the school door to free those inside. This soldier was supposedly punished by the Germans for doing this. The truth is that there was never a plan to kill those in the schoolhouse. This myth shows that the Austrians are good in contrast to the Germans. In truth, Hitler and the SS executioner Akamhuber were Austrians. There have been even tourist publications, which have embellished this myth by claiming the soldier who freed the woman was executed, and to show their gratitude the Kalavrytans have set up a monument to the "Good Soldier." All this is non-sense. There are even some German soldiers who claimed that they were the ones who did the good deed. When checked out, it was found that they had never been to Kalavryta during the war years.

5. The "Tenner" Myth. All the claims about Tenner (Dhonert) are not true. As a corporal he had no authority to make decisions. The on-site decision-maker was Maj. Ebersberger and the executioner was Akamhuber. There is also a photograph of "Tenner" smiling in front of smol-

dering homes in Kalavryta. This photo is a fake, as are some others claiming to be in Kalavryta. The soldiers in the photo are dressed in summer clothes and are wearing insignia that is not part of the Jager Division that was in the Peloponnese at the time.

These myths confused the actual history and made prosecution of the true criminals impossible. It is very wisely stated in John's Gospel: "... *and you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.*" (John, 8.32)

The Discord that Planted Seeds for the Civil War

One of the evils brought on during the last few months of the Occupation was the serious infighting and discord between the various Resistance groups that were posturing for future military and political control. Suspicion was a good enough reason to kill and be killed, and there was very little trust and plenty of hatred for people of other political factions. Personal gain was another motive for neighbors killing neighbors. This is a common phenomenon in Greek history at times of crisis and political upheaval. It happened during the War of Independence in the 1820's and every time the country was involved in a crisis.

Discord usually thrives in times of crises when gain and personal ambitions dominate over the welfare and needs of the general public. There are cases where distinguished persons, who have given generously for the common good and have made personal sacrifices for freedom and national independence, were destroyed, imprisoned, or exiled by their fellow citizens because of ignorance and intense political passions. Some prominent examples in Greek history are the assassination of hero Odysseas Androutsos and the imprisonment of Theodoros Kolokotronis; the assassination of the first president of liberated Greece, Ioannis Kapodistrias; and in the 1920's, the rejection, exile and several attempted assassinations of Eleftherios Venizelos, the most capable leader of Modern Greece.

Many treasonous acts were committed during the Occupation by those who supported the enemy, but supporters of EAM also committed wrongs, and a plethora of executions for frivolous reasons. A divisive issue was the monopolizing of the Resistance by EAM-KKE, and the fear of a Soviet-style future for Greece that encouraged many to stay on the sidelines, or even to support the enemy. Political extremists thrived and they found no common ground. The main goal of those with guns was to annihilate anyone with different beliefs. Men, like Dimitrios Michos, were pushed aside. Even Aris Velouhiotis, the founder of the ELAS, was expelled from the KKE and betrayed by some of his former comrades until he was driven to commit suicide to save his honor (Eudes).

This climate of discord finally led to the bloody Civil War (1944-1949), which delayed the return of peaceful conditions in Greece during 6 years of armed conflict and was followed by many more years of social unrest and divisiveness. This cost many lives, promoted poverty for the majority of the population, and contributed to the weakness and deterioration of the Greek economy. The weak economy resulted in substandard education, high unemployment and emigration, rampant corruption and social injustice, weakness in foreign relations, dilapidated infrastructure and health services, and even the destruction of the environment for many genera-

tions to come. The current crisis (2010-2017) caused by excessive debt in Greece can be viewed as a manifestation of all these weaknesses.

Was the Resistance Worth it?

The Greek Resistance in the beginning of the war unified the Greek people and enhanced their pride as a nation. However, during the later stages of the occupation many groups competed and fought against each with more hatred than their hatred against the invaders.

Some consider the Greek resistance against the Axis invaders critical in delaying the war against the Soviet Union. The delay in capturing the large cities of Moscow and Leningrad and other strategic objectives before the Russian winter set in was decisive in the outcome of the war. Before he died, Hitler accused Mussolini attack on Greece as the main reason for losing the war (Riefenstahl, p.295). However, the majority of historians cast doubt on the theory that the German involvement in Greece made a difference on the war against Russia and think that Hitler was trying to deflect blame of his country's defeat from himself to his ally, Italy (Hillgruber, p. 506).

During the Occupation, the Resistance helped the Allies by destroying the Gorgopotamos Bridge, which was the umbilical cord in the supply chain for German troops in Africa. But more importantly, it tied down a huge number of forces in Greece (before 1943, the Italian, German, and Bulgarian forces in Greece were about 300,000, and were never able to completely control their communications). After the Italian withdrawal in September of 1943, the Germans were forced to replace the Italians by withdrawing 180,000 of their own troops from other fronts. In the end, the Axis powers left behind 22,000 dead (Eudes).

Unfortunately, the bloodletting continued after the Germans left the country and the Civil War began with the so-called "December" events where in one month about 17,000 Greeks were killed. This was more than the war against the Axis in 1940 where the total number of dead was about 15,000.*

The human cost to Greece due to the Resistance was huge. It is estimated that the time of German withdrawal from Greece, the dead were about 500,000, or about 7% of the total population of 7.3 million. This includes the 260,000 victims in Athens who died of hunger during the first winter of the war (Eudes, p. 227).

As if this was not enough pain, the bloodletting in Greece continued for another 5 years with the subsequent Civil War.

* www.wikiwand.com/el/Δεκεμβριανά

Price Paid by My Village, Aghios Nikolaos

Compared to other nearby villages, Aghios Nikolaos had relatively fewer deaths and less destruction. However, it is worth remembering those who lost their lives. They are listed chronologically, in the order of their death:

- Konstantinos Panopoulos, 21
- Chrysafo Doupa, 81
- Evangelos B. Panopoulos, 19
- Panagiotis N. Demopoulos, 57
- Athanasios D. Ghikas, 33

Panagiotis Demopoulos was a family man who left behind 9 children.

The Germans also burned 3 homes belonging to the families of Efstathios Gournias, Dimitrios Karahalios, and Papadopoulos-Tozani.



27. Lieutenant Glitz interrogates a shepherd during an anti-guerrilla operation in the hills of the northern Peloponnese. 14 December 1943.

This photograph is from the German Army Archives (Mazower). (I was shocked to find out that the shepherd happens to be my maternal grandfather, Ioannis G. Ghikas.)

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Road to Patra ←

Eghion

Dfakopto

Road to Patra

Leonidio

Kalavryta

Soudena

χελμός
Mt. Chelmos

Feneos

Mazi

Planitero

Arbounas

Αγιος Νικόλαος

Mazeika

Κλειτορία

Kriofyta

Lyskouria

Filia

Zeugholatio

Pagrati

Vytina
Magalopolis

→ Road to Tripoli



In Aghios Nikolaos

Peter Demopoulos was born in 1941 in the village of Aghios Nikolaos, Kalavryta, Greece. After completing three years at the Kleitoria Gymnasium, at the age of 14, his family immigrated to the USA and he lived in Pasadena, California, where he graduated from Pasadena High School. He studied Engineering and Classics at UCLA and received a Master's degree from the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) in Electrical Engineering and the Engineer's Degree from USC in Electronic Communications and Radar. He worked for Hughes Aircraft Company for 35 years, and advanced to the level of Department Manager and Senior Scientist. After retiring from Hughes, he continued to work as a consultant in high-resolution radar imaging from high altitude aircraft and satellites. He and his wife, Vivi, love to travel and to spend time with their 5 children and 4 grandchildren.

**KALAVRYTA: Occupation of 1941-1944
and the Holocaust of December 13, 1943
and Memories from the Village of Aghios Nikolaos**
by Peter N. Demopoulos

"In this detailed historical account, Peter N. Demopoulos documents for posterity the events of the Kalavryta Holocaust of December 13, 1943."

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