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# World War: BALKAN THEATRE: Heaviest, Firmest

Thirty-five wounded Greek soldiers had just been put to bed in Athens Hospital one day last week when a nurse confided to some of them that old John Metaxas was dead (see p. 29). "Put us back in the ambulances," they said. "Send us back to the front." The Italians entirely miscalculated the effect of the Premier's death on Greek morale. Thinking the Greeks would go into a funk, they launched the heaviest counter-attacks of the whole war. They threaded tanks into the valleys, sent flame throwers onto the heights, and with steadier German hands to guide them, set strafing planes to hedgehop at risky low levels, to dive on causeways, bridges, gun emplacements. For the first time in months Rome was able to announce the capture of positions and prisoners.

But the Italian guess was bad. Greek morale took a new lease. Determinedly the Greeks said that action of Kelcyre had now "lost the character of a movement of purely local importance." Greek forces rallied and hit Italian counter attacks with counter-attacks of their own.

With accurate artillery and automatic small-arms fire they stopped tanks, routed infantry, even took new heights. At week's end Athens spokesmen confidently predicted the imminent capture of Tepeleni, key to the coastal front; and on the northern front Greek Sanitary Corps mopping up the battlefield buried 650 Italians.

It looked as if the Italians were putting heart into the fight, and still the Greeks pushed them around. But even after these successes, Greek soldiers did not enjoy looking into the future. They saw a new courage in the Italian Army, they saw unprecedented risks taken, and firmness foreign to the enemy. On a limited front they had broken attacks in which there seemed to be German assistance. But if that assistance grew, if it struck at Greece's spine near Salonika, then the wonderful war might become a sadder thing.

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