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RECONSTRUCTION OF GREEK PORTS AND CIVIL AVIATION IS SUMMARIZED

ATHENS — Following is the fifth in a series of weekly articles stemming
up American aid achievements in Greece from World War II to the beginning of
1952. The series covers most of the sectors in which the United States has
tried to assist Greece. This article concerns reconstruction of ports, aerial
mopping, and civil aviation.

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The ports of Greece were in wreckage at the end of World War II. The
German forces had plenty of time for destruction before they withdrew, and they
made the most of the opportunity. Greek and foreign engineers, being the
job of restoring the ports, often voiced professional — if reluctant —
admission of the thoroughness with which Nazis of breakwaters, quay walls and
other harbor installations were converted with dynamite into twisted, broken
mass.

But the German destruction was only part of the story. Many of the main
ports had already incurred heavy damage from the bombing fleets of both the
Axis and the Allies. As war surged across Greece, the harbors of Piraeus,
Syros, Corfu, Patras, Salonika and Rhodes were hit heavily from the air by
Imperial British, American and German warplanes. In some instances the Nazi
demolition experts only completed a job already largely done.

Heavy dynamite and "friendly" bombs alike set the stage for the third
phase of destruction, this time by Greece's oldest enemy and friend, the sea.
With protecting breakwaters destroyed, bad weather and heavy waves could work
their will on previously protected quays and inner harbors, and long after the
Germans left, damage to Greek port installations continued as winter followed
winter.

Under the Truman doctrine, the AID engineers concentrated their efforts
on reconstructing the three main ports of Salonika, Piraeus and Volos, so that
Greece could receive the supplies urgently needed for survival of her people
and prosecution of the civil war. The fourth major job undertaken in this
period was the restoration of the Corinth canal, the main coastal shipping link
between eastern and western Greece.

Working with an American contractor, the American army engineers supervised
construction of 2,000 linear meters of quay wall with prestressed concrete blocks
at Piraeus, Athens' port. Drydocks were repaired. Many wooden ships and tons
of other debris were removed from strategic channels which had been blocked.
Millions of dollars were spent for heavy cranes and other large port equipment.
Breakwaters were restored, as was the great Piraeus grain silo, largest in Greece,
which was equipped with modern pneumatic unloading equipment and conveyor
systems which could "unload" a large grain ship empty in a matter of hours,
whereas human shoveling labor would require many days.

At Salonnika, 860 linear meters of quay wall and 874 meters of breakwater
were rebuilt, and 6,600 tons of wreckage were removed from the harbor. At Volos,
more than 400 linear meters of quay wall was constructed and 60 meters of breakwater repaired.

But as a pure engineering achievement, the clearing of the Corinth canal seemed to make higher in public opinion than perhaps any other single recovery project in Greece. Greeks followed the progress avidly, as did the people of Europe and America, and in 1960 the Corinth canal project was acclaimed as one of the 10 outstanding achievements of the Marshall Plan among all the free nations.

Psychologically, the Corinth canal was a symbol quickly comprehended by the devastated post-war world. Here was a channel, a highway, an artery of trade -- and it was blocked completely. As modern engineering genius went to work on the project, and reports of progress were made, it seemed so Utopian to many men's minds the whole recovery effort in a war-torn continent.

Historically, the canal was famous. When Sts. Paul preached, the Corinthians had a thriving business of hauling galley ships, on gessoed wooden skids across the isthmus that separated the Greek mainland from the Peloponnese. For centuries the canal had been a dream until its completion in the 19th century.

Photographically, the canal was superb. A narrow knife-cut across the low hills, heaved only by a highway bridge and a steel railway bridge, it sliced 32 meters deep to the water level and constituted one of the most impressive gorges ever carved by man. Blocked by two great landslides when the Germans blew it in, with its bridges destroyed and the main channel choked with sunken ships, six locomotives and 120 railroad cars, it represented a formidable reconstruction problem, but one which photographers took joy in recording.

The harbor construction program, and the Corinth canal, were begun by the American engineers and continued by the Greek Ministry of Public Works with Marshall Plan advice and funds. As the recovery program proceeded, many other ports in Greece benefited from American aid funds. Corfu, which before the war was the fourth most important port in Greece, was rebuilt. Extensive work was accomplished at such mainland ports as Naousalas, Itea, Patras, and Patras. And on the islands, where ports represent the very life-blood of the people, harbor and breakwater improvements were accomplished at nearly all major islands, including Chalki, Thasos, Euboea, Mykonos, Syros, Naxos, Euboei, Kythnos, Sikinos, Chios, Lemnos, George, and Spetses. On Hydra, four of the main ports were assisted, Kerateia, Hydra Bay, Agios Nikolaos on the south coast, and St. Nicholas.

As 1961 ended, port facilities in many parts of Greece not only had been restored but were ahead of the pre-war level.

AIRIAL MAPPING. A project which has been invaluable in planning major construction programs throughout Greece is that of the Photographic Service in the Greek Ministry of Public Works. This organization, financed by U.S. aid funds and with technical supervision from American specialists, has been engaged since early 1960 in mapping large areas of Greece with the aid of aerial photography.

The Greek Photographic Service is one of the oldest and best in the world, but much of its previous work was nullified in 1944 when the Nazis destroyed vast plates of most of the maps of Greece. Good maps are essential to reconstruction, but remapping the country by ground methods would have taken decades. Aerial mapping accomplishes the job in a small fraction of the time and cost.
The photographs are taken from an airplane flying at 160 to 200 miles per hour while moving map scenes are shot using exposure of 200 seconds each. After development, the photos are superimposed on each other, and are trimmed and adjusted to eliminate distortions. The resulting mosaic is then photodensed by large photocomposing machines. Using complicated and expensive machinery, skilled operators combine the actual maps from diapositives processed from the aerial negatives.

Up to 1943, about a third of the mainland area of Greece had been photographed from the air, and maps had been produced of about half this area. Virtually all these maps concerned specific recovery projects, such as the national electrification program, land reclamation projects, mining surveys of inaccessible areas, and detailed terrain studies of sites for bridges, highways, and dams. Complete and systematic mapping of all Greece must await a better time, since the Photogeological Service has concentrated on those areas where economic recovery projects are being planned or in progress.

Through 1953, this aerial mapping project received about $256,000 in foreign exchange from American aid funds, and $9,700,000,000 in counterpart funds. The resulting work constitutes a permanent benefit to Greece.

AVIATION. Civil aviation in Greece was a child of the guerrilla war. Before World War II, commercial aviation was represented by a few local lines flying between Athens and Salonika, and various abortive aerial enterprises, Italian, Greek, French, British, which collapsed under their own weight. During the occupation, the Germans and Italials put in much work at creating and maintaining fighter and bomber bases in selected areas, work which was continued afterward by the British. But in 1945, when the communist war began in earnest, aviation was still in a primitive state in most parts of Greece.

Greek and American observers concede today that the present advanced condition of civil aviation in Greece is largely the work of the communists--not intentionally but in fact. By the late 1940's, Greek authorities had no choice but to take to the air, high above communist rifle fire, ignoring roadblocks and artillery, civilians and military passengers flew to all parts of Greece, as fast as Greek and American engineers could modernize old landing strips and carve out new ones.

By the end of the civil war, Greece was perhaps the most air-minded country in Europe, with some airports per capita than any other nation. To this day, one of the most intriguing sights in Greece is that of farmers-countryside old farmers and towns, black-clad villagers going to Greece Airplanes planes from one part of the country to another. Only 10 years ago, these passengers had only ridden donkeys, and would have been terrified at a ride in an automobile.

The evolution of an efficient modern civil aviation system was a painful process; however, and one not completely solved even yet, although great strides have been made. There were many problems--governmental, administrative, economic and technical.

The first Greek airlines began operations with three aircraft in 1946. Two more airlines began operation later, offering competing services to the same airports, with duplication of ticket offices, ground and air crews and administrative personnel. They even maintained separate terminals in the same airport.

After long and difficult negotiations, the three lines were finally amalgamated in 1948, into one Greek National Airlines, T.A.E. Ownership is by