

PRESS RELEASE



**MUTUAL SECURITY AGENCY
Special Mission to Greece for Economic Cooperation**

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RECONSTRUCTION OF GREEK PORTS AND CIVIL AVIATION IS SUMMARIZED

ATHENS -- Following is the fifth in a series of weekly articles summing 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 mapping, 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, facing the job of restoring the ports, often voiced professional -- if reluctant -- admiration of the thoroughness with which miles of breakwaters, quay walls and other harbor installations were converted with dynamite into a 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 Italian, British, American and German warplanes. In some instances the Nazi demolition experts only completed a job already largely done.

Enemy 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 AMAG 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 basic coastal shipping link between eastern and western Greece.

Working with an American contractor, the American army engineers supervised construction of 2,022 lineal meters of quay wall with pre-cast concrete blocks at Piraeus, Athens' port. Drydocks were repaired. Many sunken 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. Warehouses were restored, as was the great Piraeus grain silo, largest in Greece, which was reequipped with modern pneumatic unloading equipment and conveyor systems which could "suck" a large grain ship empty in a matter of hours, whereas human stevedore labor would require many days.

At Salonika, 560 lineal meters of quay wall and 674 meters of breakwater were rebuilt, and 6,500 tons of wreckage were removed from the harbor. At Volos,

more than 400 lineal 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 rank higher in public opinion than perhaps any other single recovery project in Greece. Greeks followed the progress avidly in their newspapers, as did the people of Europe and America, and in 1950 the Corinth canal project was acclaimed among 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 to typify in many men's minds the whole recovery effort in a war-torn continent.

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

Photogenically, the canal was superb. A narrow knife-cut across the low hills of the isthmus, spanned only by a highway bridge and a steel railway bridge, it sliced 82 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 130 railway 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 AMAG 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 Messolonghi, Igoumenitza, Kavalla, Kalamata, Nauplion, Patras, and Preveza. 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 Lefkas, Tinos, Syros, Mytilini, Leros, Kalymnos, Naxos, Paros, Mykonos, Zakynthos, Cephalonia, Sifnos, Chios, Samos, Amorgos, Kymi on Euboea, Poros, Milos, Serifos, Limnos, and Hydra. On Crete, four of the main ports were assisted, Herakleion, Suda Bay, Aghia Ghallini on the south coast, and St. Nicholas.

As 1951 ended, port facilities in many parts of Greece not only had been restored but were ahead of the pre-war level.

AERIAL MAPPING. A project which has been invaluable in planning major construction programs throughout Greece is that of the Phototopographic 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 1950 in mapping large areas of Greece with the aid of aerial photography.

The Greek Phototopographic 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 master 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 150 to 200 miles an hour while large automatic mapping cameras make about 200 exposures an hour. After development, the photos are superimposed on each other, and are trimmed and adjusted to eliminate distortions. The resulting mosaic is then rephotographed by large copying cameras. Using complicated and expensive machines, skilled operators create the actual maps from diapositives produced from the aerial negatives.

Up to 1952, 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 remapping of all Greece must await the future, since the Phototopographic Service has concentrated on those areas where economic recovery projects are being planned or in progress.

Through 1951, this aerial mapping project received about \$265,000 in foreign exchange from American aid funds, and 9,700,000,000 drachmas (about \$650,000) in counterpart funds. The resulting work constitutes a permanent benefit to Greece.

AVIATION. Civil aviation in Greece was a child of the guerilla war. Before World War II, commercial aviation was represented by a few landplanes flying between Athens and Salonika, and various abortive seaplane enterprises, Italian, Greek, French, British, which collapsed under their deficits. During the occupation, the Germans and Italians 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 1947, 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. For with railroads wiped out, ports smashed, and highways interdicted by the bandits, Greeks had no choice but to take to the air. High above communist rifle fire, ignoring roadblocks and artillery, civilian 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 more airfields per capita than any other nation. To this day one of the most intriguing sights in Greece is that of fierce-moustached old farmers and timid, black-clad village women riding in Greek Airlines 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 airline 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 on the same airfields. Only one of them, T.A.E., operated even briefly at a profit, during 1947 and 1948. The others, A.M.E. and ELLAS, were continuously in the red.

After long and difficult negotiations, the three lines were finally amalgamated in 1951, into one Greek National Airline, T.A.E. Ownership is by