

Pappas on Personal Tour Finds Greeks Winning New Thermopylae, Urges UN Close Borders

By W. E. PLAYFAIR

The Greeks are fighting another Thermopylae, but this time they are winning.

The invaders are not the hosts of Persia, but assorted Reds from many countries, and the battle is not for Greece alone, but for all the peoples of Europe. And the Hellenes of today are living up to the glorious traditions of Leonidas.

RIGHT TO BATTLE LINE

These are the findings of Thomas A. Pappas, Boston business man, who has just returned from a visit to his ancestral homeland in the interest of the Greek War Relief Committee, of which he is chairman. He went right to the battle lines in the mountains of Northern Greece to get his information.

"This is no civil war," Pappas says. "This trouble comes from the outside. The whole situation in Greece could be settled by a UN Security Council decision to close the Albanian and Bulgarian borders. The Communist guerrillas

would then be cut off from their source of money, arms and manpower."

By plane, jeep and mule-back, at one time under guerrilla fire, he travelled to the remote Grammos and Vitsi mountain regions near the Albanian border where most of the fighting between the Nationalist army and the Communist forces is taking place. There had just been a big "push," netting more than 1500 guerrilla prisoners and heaps of arms and ammunition. So Pappas got quite a bit of evidence.

DIDN'T KNOW GREEK

"Why, a great many of these prisoners didn't know the Greek language," he says. "There was one group who just stared at me when I addressed them in Greek. They had interpreters along so that they could make themselves understood. The interpreters told me the men were Albanians, Bulgarians, Russians and Yugoslavs.

"We visited the stores of captured arms, and I saw thousands of new machine-guns and rifles, all of the latest type, and of Russian and German manufacture. We had heard of these things back in America, but never been quite convinced until now.

"I asked some of the prisoners what inducement had been offered them for the difficult service they performed. They said they had been promised positions in the 'People's Government,' as they call it, and a share in the spoils of war.

"Another group told me they had been fighting for years, and that they crossed the Albanian or the Bulgarian border every time they needed a rest or vacation. They also admitted that while over the border they were given 'instruction' every day. But when I asked who gave the instruction, they refused to answer.

"That sort of evidence certainly

proves to anybody's satisfaction that the Communist forces in Greece are not Greeks, but primarily nationals of other countries recruited, paid and supplied by Communist groups outside of Greece. While the borders between Greece and Albania and Bulgaria are open, these forces can return at will to re-equip and finance new attacks. Close them, and the 'war' is over."

ON RUN NOW

Although things looked black for the Greek Government cause in late 1948, when the Communists seemed on the verge of victory, the Communists today are definitely on the run, Pappas reports. The Greek army is better equipped and more confident, and—even more important—the people of Greece have developed a fierce hatred of the Reds because of the latter's excesses.

"The Communists alienated what-

ever sympathy there may have been for them," he says. "They did this by their atrocious methods of warfare, deliberate looting and burning of villages, indiscriminate execution and ruthless policy of forced recruitment.

"Another important factor in rousing the hatred of the population was the carrying off of children as hostages to be held as a threat over their families. There are 28,000 of these children today in Albania and Bulgaria. Another problem for the United Nations!"

Although the Greeks are winning in their struggle against Communism, Pappas reports, "they are suffering a great deal in the process since money badly needed for rehabilitation must be diverted to military needs."

The cost of fighting the war and supporting more than 750,000 refugees, nearly one-tenth of the entire

population, accounts for 50 per cent of the Greek budget. The government, Pappas says, is trying its hardest to care for the people who were driven from their farms and homes during nine years of war. Many of these are living in ten cities.

One of the aims of the Greek War Relief organization is to provide the stricken country with health centers and hospitals. Pappas visited towns where such institutions are being built and found 15 almost ready for occupancy. "I was heartened by the progress being made," he says.

In his tour of the fighting front Pappas was accompanied by Gen. Van Fleet, U. S. Army observer; Gen. G. J. Kosmos, Greek chief of staff; Reginald Grady, son of the U. S. Ambassador, and several correspondents. He says the group was never in great danger, although