

1941.

NEW ZEALAND.

2nd NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.**CAMPAIGNS IN GREECE AND CRETE.**

SHORT UNOFFICIAL ACCOUNT PREPARED BY THE GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING THE 2ND N.Z.E.F. (MAJOR-GENERAL B. C. FREYBERG, V.C., C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., LL.D.) FOR THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (HONOURABLE F. JONES) ON THE OPERATIONS OF THE NEW ZEALAND DIVISION IN GREECE AND CRETE.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Leave.

GREECE.

By the end of March the New Zealand Division was concentrated in Macedonia. The 5th Brigade Group had arrived from England, thus the three contingents were together for the first time in the history of the Division. Their first role was preparing a defensive position in conjunction with the Greeks, from the coast south of the River Aliakmon to Verria Pass. The long front was too vulnerable for the forces available, and following the enemy's attack on Yugo-Slavia and Greece on the 6th April the Division was ordered to retire to a strong position on the line of the Passes, 4th Brigade Group to Servia, 5th and 6th Brigade Groups to Olympus. A quick withdrawal was made in rain and snow. This was accomplished without loss of equipment or supplies, showing a high standard of discipline and endurance in the first trial. Rain and overcast skies were a blessing, as no enemy aircraft molested our forces. This retirement was completed by 10th April. On the 12th the Australians and New-Zealanders were formed into the 2nd Anzac Corps, giving great satisfaction. From the 10th the Division fought several actions, mainly as three separate Brigade Groups, each comprising all arms. The machine-gun detachment on the Yugo-Slav frontier fired the first New Zealand shots at Veve at 2100 hours on the 10th April. On the 13th the Divisional Cavalry and Artillery on the Aliakmon River fought delaying actions, retiring over Olympus Pass on the 14th. The 4th and 5th Brigade Groups under Brigadiers Puttick and Hargest respectively came into action simultaneously at historic Servia and Olympus Passes. The 4th Brigade Group held Servia Pass, while Imperial and Greek troops from Florina Gap withdrew. The infantry action was severe, and the Germans suffered heavy casualties. The 5th Brigade Group, plus the Maoris, were holding the long line of the Olympus position, and the 21st Battalion held the coastal defile and railway-tunnel near Platymon. At Olympus the artillery, firing a phenomenal number of rounds,