

1941

Apr. 23, British and Greek troops held firm to north of Athens. North-western Greek armies capitulated and Greek Government moved to Crete.

Apr. 25, Germans seized islands of Lemnos and Samothrake. British forces in Greece continued orderly withdrawal and inflicted severe losses on attackers, estimated at 200,000 casualties since invasion of Greece.

Apr. 27, Germans entered Athens.

Apr. 30, Britain reported withdrawal of 80 p.c. of expeditionary force from Greece.  
(Events connected with the later fighting in Crete will be found in the "Near East" section of this chronology.)

# Near East

1941

Apr. 4, German-inspired coup d'état in Iraq. Rashid Ali Al Gailani ousted Premier Emir Abdul Illah.

Apr. 19, British troops landed at Basra to protect oilfields.

May 1, Additional British forces landed at Basra.

May 2, Iraq army shelled British air base at Habbaniyah.

May 4, Iraq cut off flow of oil to pipe line terminating at Haifa.

May 5, A Turkish effort to mediate between Britain and Iraq failed.

May 8, Two-hour air raid on Suez Canal resulted in some damage to railway property; no casualties.

May 11, British armoured cars occupied Fort Rutba, on Mosul oil line.

May 12, U.S.S.R. agreed to establish diplomatic relations with Iraq.

May 14, German personnel reported to be using Syrian aerodromes following Hitler-Darlan agreement.

May 15, British H.Q. in Cairo reported many German bombers and fighters were arriving at aerodromes of French Syria and Iraq. R.A.F. instructed to attack such machines on Syrian aerodromes and bombed German machines at Rayak, Palmyra and Damascus.

May 16, General Catroux, Free French leader in Middle East, appealed to Syrians to take up arms against German forces in Syria.

May 18, R.A.F. raids on Axis bases in Iraq.

May 20, Authorities in Syria and Lebanon ordered British consulates closed.

May 20-June 1, "BATTLE OF CRETE"—May 20, Air-borne invasion of Crete by Germans, featured by first use of gliders in warfare. May 21, Invasion of Crete reported checked. May 22, Heavy German air-borne reinforcements arrived in Crete and established footholds at Heraklion and Malemi aerodrome. Attempts to land invaders by sea resulted in great naval-air battle, many German machines being shot down, with British losing 2 cruisers and 4 destroyers. R.A.F. fighter aeroplanes withdrawn owing to destruction of British aerodromes and lack of ground defence. May 25, King George of Greece and his Government arrived in Egypt. Slackening of German reinforcements noted as British air forces, based on Egypt, intensified their attacks on German air bases in Greece. May 26, Germans broke through Allied positions west of Canea, Crete. New Zealanders counter-attacked at Malemi aerodrome. R.A.F. brought down 24 Axis machines. May 27, Germans enlarged their hold at Malemi to a 7-mile stretch of plain around airport. Candia (Heraklion) in ruins, but still held by British. German losses to date estimated at 18,000. May 28, British retired behind Canea in face of heavy dive-bombing and constant German reinforcements. May 29, German air force and army dislodged British and Greeks from western Crete. H.M.S. York destroyed in Suda Bay. May 30, British forces reported still occupying Retimo. June 1, War Office announced withdrawal of 15,000 British troops from Crete and the close of the Battle of Crete. This phase of the operations in the Near East was acknowledged to be the fiercest engagement of the War to date. Cruiser Calcutta and 2 destroyers lost during evacuation operations.