Manolis Bandouvas and the Interplay of Tradition, Resistance, and Allied Strategy in Crete During World War II

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Abstract

This article examines the dynamics of irregular guerrilla warfare in Crete during World War II, focusing on the operations of Manolis Bandouvas' band. Drawing on a wealth of primary sources and underexplored secondary materials, the study delves into the transformative stages of the Cretan resistance. First, it explores the formative years of German occupation (1941-1942), highlighting the emergence and consolidation of guerrilla bands, with particular emphasis on Bandouvas' strategic leadership. The core analysis centers on Bandouvas' pivotal operations in Simi and Viannos in 1943, assessing their tactical innovations and their impact on German counterinsurgency efforts. The final chapter addresses the concluding operations of Bandouvas' band (October 1943-October 1944), illustrating how the resistance adapted to evolving wartime conditions and external support dynamics, including Allied coordination.

Keywords: Crete, Greece, World War II, Bandouvas, Viannos, reprisals, war crimes, irregular warfare, occupation

Manolis Bandouvas y la interacción entre tradición, resistencia y estrategia aliada en Creta durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial

Resumen

Este artículo examina la dinámica de la guerra de guerrillas irregular en Creta durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial, centrándose en las operaciones de la banda de Manolis Bandouvas. Basándose en una gran cantidad de fuentes primarias y materiales secundarios poco explorados, el estudio profundiza en las etapas transformadoras de la resistencia cretense. En primer lugar, explora los años formativos de la ocupación alemana (1941-1942), destacando el sur-

gimiento y la consolidación de las bandas guerrilleras, con especial énfasis en el liderazgo estratégico de Bandouvas. El análisis central se centra en las operaciones fundamentales de Bandouvas en Simi y Viannos en 1943, evaluando sus innovaciones tácticas y su impacto en los esfuerzos de contrainsurgencia alemanes. El capítulo final aborda las operaciones finales de la banda de Bandouvas (octubre de 1943-octubre de 1944), ilustrando cómo la resistencia se adaptó a las condiciones cambiantes de la guerra y la dinámica del apoyo externo, incluida la coordinación aliada.

Palabras clave: Creta, Grecia, Segunda Guerra Mundial, Bandouvas, Viannos, represalias, crímenes de guerra, guerra irregular, ocupación

二战期间的Manolis Bandouvas、以及克里特岛的传统、抵抗和盟军战略的相互作用

摘要

本文分析了二战期间克里特岛非正规游击战的动态，重点关注了Manolis Bandouvas的游击队行动。本研究利用大量一手资料和未被充分挖掘的次级资料，深入探讨了克里特岛抵抗运动的变革阶段。首先，本文探讨了德国占领的形成时期（1941-1942年），强调了游击队的出现和巩固，特别强调了Bandouvas的战略领导力。核心分析聚焦于1943年Bandouvas在锡米岛和维安诺斯的关键行动上，评估了他们的战术创新及其对德国反叛乱势力的影响。最后一章讨论了Bandouvas团伙的最后行动（1943年10月 - 1944年10月），阐明了抵抗运动如何适应不断变化的战时条件和外部支持动态，包括盟军的协调。

关键词：克里特岛，希腊，二战，Bandouvas，维安诺斯，报复，战争罪，非常规战争，占领

The Guerrilla Tradition in Crete

Crete is the largest island in Greece, consisting of four districts of 8,450[2] km. In 1940, 438,239 people lived there, mostly in the area's western and central parts.[1] Steep mountains characterize the Cretan geography: Lefka Ori in the Western and Mount Ida in the central part of the island are the highest, but—most

importantly—the most dangerous for any army that hopes to control the region. Taking advantage of the forbidding ground, Cretans had developed a marvelous guerrilla tradition from the Renaissance Period. However, despite Venetians being the first to taste the skills of the local warriors, the latter excelled primarily against the Ottomans. Indeed, the presence of the High Porte's troops (1669–1913) combined with dozens of revolts against them. Those revolts and the continuous activity of guerrilla bands resulted in the Great Powers' decision to cede Crete to the Greek Kingdom in 1913.[2]

The evolution of local society was significantly influenced by the guerrilla warfare that occurred in the Cretan mountains against the Ottomans, mainly in the 19th century. First, the institution of the family became more important because it was used as a source of recruitment for guerrillas, and its wealth was necessary for the band's equipment.[3] In this context, as Crete, after the Greek Revolution (1821–1830), became a "war economy," the family's members began to be more willing to abandon the peaceful life and be guerrillas.[4]

Guerrilla tradition also affected the locals' connection to their arms. Even after the collapse of Ottoman domination, most of the men in Crete carried their guns in public ceremonies and did not doubt using them if they felt threatened. Simultaneously, the guerrilla warfare and the empowering of the family's role influenced the frequency of "vendetta," a bloody custom that still exists in Crete. The logic of this tradition is simple— a man must take revenge for the murder of a family member. Thus, if a Turkish (and later a German) soldier had killed a guerrilla, his brothers were responsible for striking back and killing as many of their opponents as they could. For them, this was the only way to erase the family's shame. Understanding this tradition is crucial when analyzing operations like those conducted by Bandouvas during World War II.[5]

The Battle of Crete: The Praeludium of the Resistance Movement

By the late 1930s, the only formal military presence on the island was the V Infantry Division, consisting of approximately 20,000 highly trained Cretan soldiers commanded by Major General Georgios Papastergiou.[6] In October 1940, following the outbreak of the Greco-Italian War, the Greek dictator Ioannis Metaxas deployed the division to the front lines in Epirus, leaving Crete undefended.[7]

British troops began arriving on the island in November 1940 to compensate for the absence of Greek forces. These reinforcements, however, faced serious challenges: they suffered from communication difficulties and a lack of cohesive leadership, as their commander, Lieutenant General Bernard Freyberg, was unfamiliar with Crete's geography and had only been appointed in April 1941.[8]

The Battle of Crete ("Operation Mercury") commenced on 20 May 1941, following the German invasion

of the Balkans, where they supported their Italian allies in their conflict with Greece. Despite six months of resistance, Greek forces could not halt the advancing Axis troops. The Greek V Division alone suffered 1,141 casualties, with thousands more injured, mirroring the losses across other units. After the Greek Army capitulated, its soldiers were prohibited from returning to Crete, as the Germans feared they would contribute to the island's defense. Consequently, many of these men ended up destitute on the streets of Athens and perished during the Great Famine of 1940–1941.[9]

On Crete, the unseasoned Commonwealth forces faced an elite German paratrooper assault, which began on 20 May. Although the local population, including women, children, and elders, intended to aid the British soldiers, they were largely unarmed. Compounding the Allies' difficulties, Freyberg or his superiors never ordered the destruction of the island's three airfields, leaving them vulnerable to German attacks. Indeed, while the Germans failed to capture the major airfields of Rethymno and Heraklion, they exploited a critical miscommunication among Allied forces in Maleme, western Crete. By dislodging the Maori defenders, German paratroopers gained control of the area and advanced eastward. Following this, Axis reinforcements arrived continuously, forcing the Allies to retreat, with assistance from the local population.[10] By early June, the battle had concluded, and Italian forces, coming from the Dodecanese, bloodlessly occupied the Lasithi region in eastern Crete.[11]

Despite the negative outcome of the battle for the Allies, the long guerrilla tradition of the locals did not dissipate with this defeat. Instead, it found new expression in resistance to the German occupation, as Cretan fighters once again took to the mountains to wage asymmetrical warfare against a foreign oppressor. This resistance culminated in notable operations such as the abduction of General Heinrich Kreipe in 1944 and played a pivotal role in undermining German control over the island.[12]

The First Years of the German Occupation, the Arrival of British Agents, and the Creation of Guerrilla Bands in Crete (1941–1942)

During the Battle of Crete, British intelligence operatives recruited several pro-Allied guerrilla leaders, including Antonis Grigorakis, known as "Satanas," Georgios Petrakis, or "Petrakogeorgis," and Manolis Bandouvas. Grigorakis, a former supporter of the influential statesman Eleftherios Venizelos, was arguably the most formidable of the three. However, his deteriorating health limited his involvement, and by the summer of 1942, he was compelled to leave the island.[13]

Thus, during the German Occupation (1941–1945), the resistance in Crete was primarily led by Petrakogeorgis and Bandouvas, alongside a few other less prominent local figures. Petrakogeorgis, a pro-British businessman with a pragmatic and calm demeanor,

Image 1: German paratroopers at the Battle of Crete (May 1941). Those elite forces faced the resistance of local irregular bands [Bundesarchiv].

had established himself as a key figure even before the war. In contrast, Bandouvas was more dynamic, ambitious, and forceful. Having served in the Greek Army during the Greco-Turkish War of 1919–1922 and later engaged in brigandage, by 1940, Bandouvas was a well-respected member of the local elite, known for both his wealth and integrity.[14]

Simultaneously, during the early years of the German occupation (1941–1942), British agents began arriving secretly in Crete. These men were often young military officers educated at prestigious institutions like Oxford and Cambridge, such as Christopher Montague Woodhouse, or adventurous mavericks like Patrick Leigh Fermor, who thrived on breaking the rigid conventions of military discipline. Initially, their primary mission was to organize the escape of stranded Commonwealth soldiers with the help of local Cretans. However, the fierce desire of the Cretan population to resist the occupation soon prompted the development of more ambitious plans.[15]

On his part, Bandouvas, like many former guerrilla fighters, had refused to return to civilian life after the Battle of Crete. Thus, he gathered a group of men from villages in central Crete, equipping them with weapons he had hidden away. By late 1941, his efforts attracted the attention and support of British intelligence, who supplied him with additional arms, ammunition,

and training. Bandouvas organized and disciplined his force with British assistance, which expanded rapidly.[16] He also attempted to collaborate with communist guerrillas in western Crete, whose influence was growing under the leadership of figures such as Major General Manolis Mandakas, a pro-Venizelist who later aligned with the Greek Communist Party (Kommounistiko Komma Elladas, KKE).[17]

The British, however, viewed such alliances with suspicion. Their primary concern was that the Greek Communist Party might leverage the resistance movement to seize power after the liberation of Greece. This concern created tensions between British agents and Bandouvas. Besides, while Bandouvas favored bold and rapid offensives aimed at forcing a German withdrawal from Crete, the British pursued a more calculated approach. Their strategy prioritized smaller-scale ambushes designed to inflict steady attrition on German forces, aligning with broader Allied plans to stretch Axis resources thin across multiple fronts.

In this context, 1942 proved pivotal for the development of Cretan resistance. This year, Bandouvas' and Petrakogeorgis' forces clashed with German troops on several occasions, solidifying their control over the central Cretan mountains. However, tensions between Bandouvas and British operatives grew, primarily because their actions often triggered harsh German reprisals. These reprisals deepened the locals' hatred of the Germans, they also fueled resentment toward the British for provoking such suffering. Additionally, the British could not provide the support Bandouvas demanded and frequently favored Petrakogeorgis, which triggered the Cretan leader.[18]

Meanwhile, communist factions continued to strengthen their presence in Crete and attempted to ally with Bandouvas. While their efforts were limited to temporarily embedding one of their comrades, Yanni Podias, in Bandouvas' group, these internal rivalries, complicated alliances with foreign agents, and the rising influence of the communist forces contributed to a fractured resistance movement. These dynamics would profoundly shape the course of the struggle in Crete in 1943.

Bandouvas and Operation Albumen (1942–1943)

In the summer of 1942, the Allies launched a series of commando operations in Crete under the codename "Albumen." These missions targeted the strategic airfields of Heraklion, Maleme, Tymbaki, and Kastelli, which the Germans used as transit hubs for transporting supplies to North Africa. The significance of these airfields in sustaining Axis forces in Egypt made them a high priority for British planners.[19]

The first attacks of 1942 successfully destroyed several Luftwaffe aircraft at Heraklion and Kastelli and resulted in the deaths of several German soldiers. The Allied focus on Cretan airfields continued into 1943, with renewed operations designed to dam-

age German capabilities and mislead the Axis into believing that an Allied invasion of Crete was imminent. This deception aligned with broader Allied strategies in the Mediterranean, particularly to divert German resources from Sicily, where the real invasion (Operation Husky) was planned. The sabotage missions aimed to inflict heavy casualties on Axis forces and prevent the German aircraft stationed in Crete from interfering in the Sicily campaign.[20]

On 23 June 1943, a team of saboteurs landed at Tripiti Beach in southern Crete to execute the operation. The group included several well-trained Cretans—Kimon Zografakis, Yannis Androulakis, and Giorgis Voskakis—who had been trained in Egypt and possessed intimate knowledge of the terrain. The operation's leader, British Colonel David Sutherland, divided his team into three groups: the first group, led by Lieutenant Anders Larsen, targeted the Kastelli airfield, the second group, under Lieutenant Kenneth Lamonby, focused on the Heraklion airfield, and the third group, led by Lieutenant Rony Rovs, aimed to sabotage the Tymbaki airfield.[21]

While the groups targeting Heraklion and Tymbaki achieved limited success due to the Germans having moved their aircraft to more secure locations, the operation at Kastelli was more effective. Larsen's group managed to distract the Germans on the western side of the airfield, allowing other commandos to infiltrate from the east. They destroyed aircraft and ammunition dumps, delivering a significant blow to German operations in the area. However, the escape phase proved challenging. After completing their mission, the commandos regrouped at Tripiti, intending to leave Crete by boat. On 10 July 1943, the Germans discovered their location, resulting in a fierce battle in which Lamonby was killed.[22]

Manolis Bandouvas and his guerrillas played a critical role in supporting Operation Albumen. Their most significant contributions occurred in Kastelli, where Yannis Bandouvas, Manolis' brother, directly participated in the operation. The guerrillas engaged German forces, provided logistical support, such as food and supplies, and guided the saboteurs through the rugged terrain to their targets. These contributions were vital to the operation's success and demonstrated the close cooperation between the Cretan resistance and Allied forces.[23]

However, these successes came at a high cost: Axis forces retaliated by executing 62 civilians near Heraklion, highlighting the brutal consequences of resistance operations on the local population.[24] Besides, for Manolis Bandouvas, such sabotage missions were not enough. Convinced that an Allied invasion of Crete was imminent, he envisioned a large-scale confrontation with Axis forces. His determination to prepare for such an operation ultimately led to the tragic events of the Viannos massacre, one of the most devastating German reprisals of World War II.

Image 2: Manolis Bandouvas (center) with his brothers, Yiannis and Nikos, who also participated in the resistance movement against the Germans. Family connections were crucial for the Cretan guerrillas [Creta One].

Bandouvas' Operations in Simi and Viannos (1943)

In the summer of 1943, according to British agent Patrick Leigh Fermor, Manolis Bandouvas led a seasoned guerrilla force of approximately 160 men. This group was composed of a diverse array of individuals, including New Zealand and Australian soldiers who had fought in the Battle of Crete, a former Russian prisoner, students, elders, a small contingent of communist fighters, a larger group of royalists, pro-Venizelist military officers, and mostly illiterate villagers like Bandouvas himself. At this time, Bandouvas claimed that if he had sufficient arms, he could recruit over 2,000 additional fighters.[25]

Bandouvas' ambitions were clear—assisting British commandos in clandestine operations and organizing ambushes against the Germans was insufficient. He sought to liberate Crete outright. The Germans' confiscation of his fortune in the spring of 1943 and the execution of several of his family members only intensified his resolve. By the summer of 1943, with rumors of an Allied invasion of Italy and potentially Crete, Bandouvas was determined to take decisive action.[26]

In retrospect, Bandouvas' decisions can appear reckless. Still, it is essential to understand the context of 1943—the information available to Cretan guerrillas was often vague, and Bandouvas lacked the formal education of a military officer or diplomat. His worldview was shaped by traditional values, where every man was seen as a potential warrior, and honor, or "timi," was paramount. For people like Bandouvas, defending personal and family honor precedes the broader strategic consequences. These cultural factors heavily influenced his subsequent actions.

In addition to these cultural and personal motivations, Bandouvas had practical concerns in the summer of 1943. His relations with the British had soured due to his persistent demands for more weapons. Meanwhile, Petrakogeorgis in central Crete and communist guerrilla bands in the west were growing stronger, challenging his leadership. Thus when Bandouvas learned of the imminent Italian withdrawal from the island, he interpreted it as a sign that an Allied invasion of Crete was near and felt compelled to act swiftly.[27]

Between 10 and 15 August 1943, Bandouvas mobilized as many fighters as possible, claiming his forces swelled to 3,222 guerrillas. Most came from the Viannos region in central Crete and were bound to Bandouvas through family or economic ties.[28] Their motivations were a mix of rage, patriotism, and honor, particularly as many had lost family members to German reprisals. The vendetta culture, deeply ingrained in Cretan society, played a key role in driving these men to fight, often with the expectation of sacrificing their lives for the cause.[29]

Bandouvas, whose own family had suffered from German atrocities, believed he could liberate central Crete before the anticipated Allied invasion.[30] However, no British agents supported his plan; Patrick Leigh Fermor secretly worked on extracting the commander of the Italian 51st Infantry Division, "Siena," Angelo Carta, from the island to Egypt. Carta, a royalist who resisted German orders to execute civilians, had expressed a desire to collaborate with the Allies. Fermor's operations had to remain covert to avoid alerting the Germans.[31]

Unaware of these British plans and fixated on his belief in an imminent invasion, Bandouvas attacked a small German garrison in Simi on 9-10 September 1943. The timing was significant—Italy had capitulated to the Allies on 8 September, and the guerrilla leader assumed Crete would be next. The operation resulted in the deaths of two Axis soldiers but also alerted the Germans, precisely the outcome the British had feared.[32]

Following the attack on Simi, Bandouvas' forces moved to Viannos, a hub of armed resistance. He deployed approximately 300 guerrillas, and on 12 September, a German convoy advanced against them. In the initial skirmish between Simi and Pefko villages, the Greeks emerged victorious, capturing hostages and spoils. Bandouvas then ordered ambushes to be prepared in case German reinforcements arrived from Chania.[33]

Bandouvas led his men to Agio Pnevma to further consolidate his position and recruited additional fighters from nearby villages. He also moved to Selekano, where thousands of Italian soldiers, eager to surrender, had gathered. He disarmed them and invited any willing soldiers to join his forces. According to Bandouvas, 360 Italians agreed to fight alongside him, though even this number proved insufficient for his ambitious plans.[34]

On his behalf, Lieutenant General Friedrich-Wilhelm Müller, the German commander of "Fortress Crete," had no intention of allowing the mass surrender of his former Italian allies to the guerrillas or permitting the resistance to dominate central Crete. To suppress the growing insurgency, Müller dispatched 2,000 troops to Viannos and surrounding villages, with brutal instructions:

> *Destroy the Viannos province. Execute immediately, without trial, every man over 16 years old and anyone captured in the countryside, regardless of gender or age.*[35]

Indeed, following Müller's orders, German forces encircled Viannos. On 13 September 1943, they entered the village of Agios Vasileios and ordered the residents to remain indoors, warning that those who disobeyed would be executed. This tactic was designed to prevent civilians from escaping, a method the Germans would use repeatedly in the coming days.[36]

The following day, German troops set fire to the villages of Pefko and Simi, near the site of the recent battles. Simultaneously, they destroyed several other villages—Kefalovrisi, Kato Simi, Amiras, Vahos, Agios, Mirtos, Gdohia, Riza, Mournies, Mithi, Malles, Christos, and Metaxohori. Hundreds of civilians, especially men over 16, were executed in a calculated wave of terror. For the German soldiers, the atrocities became a grotesque celebration; they danced, sang, and mocked the grieving survivors.[37]

In response, Bandouvas' forces managed to kill over 20 German soldiers but stood little chance of halting the overwhelming enemy. The terror unleashed by the Germans also hampered guerrilla recruitment efforts, as fear spread throughout the local population.[38] On their part, the German occupation forces imprisoned around 300 hostages in Ano Viannos' high school, threatening to execute them unless Bandouvas released the German soldiers he had captured. Realizing the situation was hopeless, the Cretan leader was compelled to comply with the German demands, releasing the prisoners. However, this did not pacify the Ger-

mans, who, on 14 October, razed the villages of Kefalovrisi, Krevvatia, Pefko, Simi, Kalami, Sikologos, Mirtos, Gdohia, Mournies, and Kaimeno.[39]

On 15 September, Bandouvas' forces began a five-day retreat, aiming to evade the German troops by moving towards Sfakia, about 150 kilometers west of Viannos. Thus, the guerrillas passed near Kastelli airport, some 35 kilometers south of Heraklion, traveling by night to avoid detection. Though most of the group reached safety, a small contingent lost its way and was forced into battle near Omalos Mountain. Both sides sustained heavy casualties during this skirmish, marking a tragic and bloody chapter in the Cretan resistance.[40]

In the aftermath of the war, historians debated Bandouvas' motivations. A central point of contention is the theory that specific British agents may have encouraged Bandouvas to act to divert German attention to a secondary front. However, the archival evidence does not conclusively support this hypothesis, and figures such as Patrick Leigh Fermor were quick to express their dissent regarding this interpretation.

Regarding the German response, it is more plausible that they utilized Bandouvas' actions as a pretext to rationalize their brutal reprisals. Viannos had long served as a bastion for Cretan guerrillas and British agents, which alarmed the German occupiers, including Lieutenant General Müller. The destruction of this region served the objective of instilling fear within the local population and temporarily suppressing guerrilla activities. The memory of these atrocities persists in the collective consciousness of the local community, with a small museum dedicated to commemorating the events and honoring the victims.

The Last Operations of Bandouvas' band in Crete (October 1943–October 1944)

Following the Viannos operation, Bandouvas faced immense pressure from German forces. His attempts to escape from Crete were fraught with danger, as German troops had encircled his hideouts and executed several members of his family. These developments forced him into hiding in the rugged mountains of Sfakia, where he remained for approximately a month. Despite the challenges, he escaped with a small group of companions aboard a British vessel on 31 October 1943. Their destination was Egypt, where Bandouvas and his comrades were exiled for over a year.[41]

On 17 November 1943, the Germans issued an appeal to the Cretan population, stating the following:

> *The arch-brigand Bandouvas has abandoned the island with his bodyguards. Thus, Crete has been freed from this treacherous individual who caused so much suffering to the peaceful population. If so many women are widowed and so many children are orphaned, it is because of this criminal. The fight against the remnants of his gang continues with relentless cruelty.*

> *(...) The German Army is a friend of the Cretan people. It will not allow this beautiful island to become a theater of war again or a haven for the disturbing activities of the gangs—these enemies of the people.*
>
> *Everyone who provides assistance to the army during this struggle will be welcomed.*[42]

After Bandouvas' departure, his unit's activities significantly diminished. Some members continued operating under the leadership of his brother, Yannis Bandouvas, but their capacity was limited. Although sporadic ambushes against German forces and executions of suspected collaborators persisted, the unit's influence had waned by 1944. The peak of their operational power and influence was clearly over.[43]

Manolis Bandouvas returned to Crete on 9 October 1944, at a time when German control had significantly weakened due to the Axis' defeats on both the western and eastern fronts. Upon his return, he immediately resumed command of his band and, on 11 October, issued an ultimatum to the German commander of the island, General Hans-Georg Benthack, who was surrounded in Heraklion. In the ultimatum, Bandouvas warned the German forces that his men were prepared to launch an attack if they did not abandon the city. Tensions were high, as hundreds of guerrillas were eager to exact bloody revenge on an enemy responsible for numerous atrocities against their families.[44]

Recognizing the precariousness of his position, Benthack arranged a meeting with Bandouvas, mediated by the Vicar of the Holy Metropolis of Crete, Evgenios Psallodakis. During the negotiations, the German commander agreed to surrender Heraklion without a fight to spare his troops from potential reprisals. Following the agreement, Bandouvas entered the city as a liberator and assumed the role of Military Commander of the region, tasked with restoring security and order in the Heraklion Prefecture. This pivotal act marked the end of the occupation in the area and solidified Bandouvas' legacy as one of Crete's most prominent and respected resistance leaders.[45]

Conclusion

The Cretan resistance movement during World War II exemplified a distinctive model of irregular warfare, deeply rooted in the island's rugged terrain, its population's historical proclivity for guerrilla tactics, and the intertwining of traditional values with modern resistance strategies. The operations of Manolis Bandouvas' band illustrate these defining characteristics, showcasing how localized agency, cultural imperatives, and external influences converged to shape the resistance's trajectory.

Bandouvas' leadership reflected both the strengths and limitations of the Cretan approach to asymmetrical warfare. His ability to mobilize a diverse force, including villagers, escaped Allied soldiers, and former Italian troops, demonstrated the adaptability and re-

Image 3: Viannos is a small village in Crete today. The collective memory of the German war crimes is still active [Agonas tis Kritis].

sourcefulness emblematic of Cretan resistance leaders. Equally significant was his cultural alignment with the ethos of "timi" (honor), which motivated both his personal commitment and the resolve of his fighters. These factors reinforced the moral and psychological dimensions of the resistance, enabling it to persist despite severe reprisals and logistical constraints.

At the operational level, Bandouvas' actions underscored the dual role of resistance fighters as both military and political actors. While demonstrating tactical ingenuity, his confrontations with German forces in Simi and Viannos also drew attention to the challenges of balancing local imperatives with broader strategic objectives. These operations, characterized by ambushes and the integration of captured resources, highlighted the guerrilla movement's reliance on initiative and decentralized command structures. However, the devastating German reprisals following these engagements revealed the inherent risks of confrontation and underscored the tension between local ambitions and Allied strategic priorities.

Bandouvas' contributions to the resistance resonate within the broader context of irregular warfare. His actions exemplify the importance of integrating cultural and local knowledge into guerrilla operations, a principle that continues to inform modern counterinsur-

gency doctrines. Moreover, his efforts emphasized the centrality of leadership in sustaining morale and cohesion within diverse and often fractious resistance movements.

As the historiography of World War II continues to evolve, the study of figures like Bandouvas offers valuable insights into the dynamics of resistance under occupation. By examining his legacy, we gain a deeper understanding of how local actors shaped the course of military resistance, navigating the interplay between traditional values, immediate wartime exigencies, and the shifting tides of global conflict. In this context, Bandouvas' band symbolized the indomitable spirit of the Cretan resistance and contributed a critical chapter to the broader narrative of irregular warfare in the 20th century.

About the Author

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E%BF%CF%85%20%CE%B1%CE%B5%CF%81%CE%BF%CE%B4%CF%81%CE%BF%CE%BC%CE%AF%CE%BF%CF%85%20%CE%97%CF%81%CE%B1%CE%BA%CE%BB%CE%B5%CE%AF%CE%BF%CF%85,12%20%CF%80%CE%B1%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B9%CF%8E%CF%84%CE%B5%CF%82%20%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%82%203%CE%B7%CF%82%20%CE%99%CE%BF%CF%85%CE%BD%CE%AF%CE%BF%CF%85.

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Notes

1 *Πληθυσμός της Ελλάδας κατά την απογραφήν της 16 Οκτωβρίου 1940 [Population of Greece during the census of 16 October 1940]* (Athens: National Print Shop, 1946), 10-12.

2 Paschalis M. Kitromilides, "Crete" in Paschalis M. Kitromilides and Constantinos Tsoukalas (ed.) *The Greek Revolution: A Critical Dictionary* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2021), 193-202; Ann Pottinger Saab, "The Doctors' Dilemma: Britain and the Cretan Crisis 1866-69." *The Journal of Modern History* 49 (4) (1977): D1383-407; Iosif P. Maravelakis, "'Unofficial Duties in Periods of Crisis during the 1866–69 Revolt: The Cases of Charles Dickson and Lysimachus Calocherino." *From Crete to London: An Example of a Bottom-up Exercise of British Power in the 19th Century Ottoman Empire* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2024), 85-106; Chris Moorey, "Ottoman Rule II: 1821 to 1898." *A History of Crete* (London: Haus Publishing, 2019), 184-224; Leonidas Kallivretakis, "A Century of Revolutions: The Cretan Question between European and Near Eastern Politics" in Paschalis M. Kitromilides (ed.). *Eleftherios Venizelos: The Trials of Statesmanship* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 11-35.

3 Leland G. Allbaugh, "The Cretan Family," *Crete* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 73-96.

4 James K. Galbraith, "The War Economy." *Archives of the Levy Economics Institute*. 71, (2001), https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/levy_archives/71. Retrieved on 2-9-2024.

5 Paul Sant Cassia, "Banditry, Myth, and Terror in Cyprus and Other Mediterranean Societies." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35 (4), (1993): 773-95; Gideon M. Kressel, et al. "Sororicide/Filiacide: Homicide for Family Honour [and Comments and Reply]." *Current Anthropology* 22 (2), (1981): 141-58; Jan Brögger, "Conflict Resolution and the Role of the Bandit in Peasant Society." *Anthropological Quarterly* 41 (4), (1968): 228-240; Osvaldo Cavallar and Julius Kirshner "Vendetta." *Jurists and Jurisprudence in Medieval Italy: Texts and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 422-431; Tullia Magrini, "Manhood and Music in Western Crete: Contemplating Death." *Ethnomusicology* 44 (3), (2000): 432-433.

According to the word's etymology and the fact that the phenomenon had been witnessed in several Italian cities, Vendetta probably has Italian origins. See (selective-

ly): N. P. J. Gordon, "The Murder of Buondelmonte: Contesting Place in Early Fourteenth-Century Florentine Chronicles." *Renaissance Studies* 20 (4) (2006): 459-477; Michael Broers, "Revolution as Vendetta: Napoleonic Piedmont 1801–1814 II." *The Historical Journal* 33 (4) (1990): 787–809; Trevor Dean, "Marriage and Mutilation: Vendetta in Late Medieval Italy." *Past & Present* 157 (1997): 3'36.

6 *Ιστορία της 5ης ΤΑΞΠΖ "V Μεραρχία Κρητών" [History of the 5th Infantry Brigade "V Cretan Division"], (*Rethymno: Military Museum of Rethymno, 2014), 88.

7 *Ibid*, 88-92.

8 Barry Jones, "Freyberg, Bernard Cyril," *Dictionary of World Biography* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2021), 328.

9 Giorgos Stratakis, *Ο Γολγοθάς της 5ης Μεραρχίας Κρητών 1940-1941 [The Calvary of the 5th Cretan Division 1940–1941]* (Athens: Svoura, 2024).

10 Patira Edwards, Ngāpuhi (1919-2005), interviewed by Megan Hutching, 27 November 2000, for the *Second World War oral history project – Crete*. From the collections of the Alexander Turnbull Library Oral History and Sound collection, OHInt-0729-08, n.d., https://www.28maoribattalion.org.nz/audio/patira-edwards-describes-being-fed-cretan-people. Retrieved on 13 September 2024.

11 Theodore L. Gatchel, "Can a Battle Be Lost in the Mind of the Commander?" *Naval War College Review*, 38 (1) (1985): 96-99; Mark Edmond Clark, "The German Invasion of Crete and the Importance of Intelligence and Logistical Planning in the Rapid Deployment of Light Units." *Army History*, 21 (1991): 31-36; M. E. P. "Greece and the War." *Bulletin of International News*, 21 (3) (1944): 91-101.

Churchill stated during the Battle of Crete: "It is a most strange and grim battle that is being fought. Our side have no air support because they have no aerodromes, not because they have no aeroplanes. The other side have very little or none of artillery and tanks. Neither side has any means of retreat." See "Mr. Churchill's Statements on the Fighting in Crete." *Bulletin of International News*, 18 (11) (1941): 690-691. The above statement is partly false, because airdromes existed, but only the Germans took advantage of them.

12 David Brewer, *Greece, the Decade at War. Occupation, Resistance and Civil War* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016), 53.

13 Anthony Beevor, *Crete. The Battle and the Resistance (*London: Murray, 2005), 51.

14 Xan Fielding, *Hide and Seek: The Story of a War-time Agent (*London: Secker & Warburg, 1954), 194; Dimosthenis Koukounas, *Η Εθνική Αντίσταση στην Κρήτη 1941–1945 [The National Resistance in Crete 1941–1945]* (Athens: Historia, 2022), 28.

According to Chris Woodhouse, a British agent who served in Crete and mainland Greece, and later became a successful academic, everyone trusted Bandouvas' integrity and skills. This led him to provide significant amounts of supplies to the Cretan guerrilla leader. However, the relationships between them would deteriorate after some years.

15 Beevor, *Op. Cit.,* p. 130.

16 Hellenic Army History Directorate, Emmanouil Bandouvas' report about the Cretan National Resistance, 20/8/1945.

17 Koukounas, *Ibid,* 28-31.

18 As historian Antony Beevor insightfully observed, Petrakogeorgis was Bandouvas' "frere ennemi" (brother-enemy). Beevor, *Op. Cit.*, 127.

19 WO 373/46/22, Recommendation for Award for The Earl of Jellicoe Rank, 5 November 1942.

20 James Holland, *Sicily '43: The First Assault on Fortress Europe* (New York: Grove Atlantic, 2020).

21 Giorgos Kallogerakis, "Το α' σαμποτάζ του αεροδρομίου Καστελίου και ο καπετάν Μανόλης Μπαντουβάς" [The first sabotage in Kastelli airfield and the captain Manolis Bandouvas], *Patris,* 24/12/2008, https://archive.patris.gr/articles/148156.

22 Ibid.

23 Giorgos Kallogerakis, "62 Μάρτυρες" [62 Martyrs], *Patris,* 15/7/2020, https://www.patris.gr/istoria/62-martyres-ioannis-emm-manoysakis-14-ioynioy-1942/#:~:text=%CE%A4%CE%BF%20%CF%83%CE%B1%CE%BC%CF%80%CE%BF%CF%84%CE%AC%CE%B6%20%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%85%20%CE%B1%CE%B5%CF%81%CE%BF%CE%B4%CF%81%CE%BF%CE%BC%CE%AF%CE%BF%CF%85%20%CE%97%CF%81%CE%B1%CE%BA%CE%BB%CE%B5%CE%AF%CE%BF%CF%85,12%20%CF%80%CE%B1%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B9%CF%8E%CF%84%CE%B5%CF%82%20%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%82%203%CE%B7%CF%82%20%CE%99%CE%BF%CF%85%CE%BD%CE%AF%CE%BF%CF%85.

24 Hellenic Army History Directorate, Emmanouil Bandouvas' report about the Cretan National Resistance, 20-8-1945.

25 *Ibid*, 149.

26 Giorgos Kalogerakis, "Εκδήλωση μνήμης – Ομάδες Μπαντουβάδων" ["Commemorative event – Banduvas' groups"], *Patris,* 29-9-2008, https://archive.patris.gr/articles/142249. Retrieved on 10-9-2024.

27 Koukounas, *Op. Cit.,* 42-44.

28 Antonis Sanoudakis, *Καπετάν Μπαντουβά Απομνημονεύματα [Captain Bandouvas' Memoirs]* (Athens: Knossos, 1979), 317.

29 German atrocities in Crete began already in July of 1941 and included executions of civilians in Kontomari, Kandanos, and several other villages. For their behavior, see:

Jannis Skalidakis, *Η Κρήτη στα χρόνια της Κατοχής 1941–1945 [Crete in the years of Occupation 1941–1945] (*Athens: Asini, 2023).

30 According to the retired Colonel and guerrilla leader Ioannis Kontakis, Bandouvas desired to face the Germans in a large-scale battle in July 1943. However, Kontakis himself insisted that such a confrontation could provoke serious retaliations by the occupants and the destruction of Viannos. The same officer narrated that Bandouvas was frustrated and threatened to kill him, but finally agreed to postpone his plans.

See: Ioannis Kontakis, "Η μαρτυρία του Γιάννη Κοντάκη για τα γεγονότα της Βιάννου" [The testimony of Yannis Kontakis about the events of Viannos], *Patris,* 29-4-2005, https://archive.patris.gr/articles/59484. Retrieved on 10-9-2024.

31 Beevor, *Op. Cit.,* 150.

32 Sanoudakis, *Op. Cit.,* 318-319.

33 *Ibid*, 319-322.

34 *Ibid*, 322-324.

35 Rick Stroud, *Kidnap in Crete: The True Story of the Abduction of a Nazi General* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 92.

36 Beevor, *Op. Cit.,* 151.

37 In 1945, the Greek government tasked renowned intellectuals Nikos Kazantzakis, Ioannis Kakridis, and Ioannis Kalitsounakis with investigating German war crimes in Crete. Kazantzakis, born in Heraklion in 1883, and his colleagues focused their report on the September 1943 massacres in Viannos. They described the German occupation forces' behavior in Amiras in particularly chilling detail:

"When the Germans entered Amiras, the locals, following their mayor's advice, greeted them at the village entrance with wine, raki, and food. The Germans, having surrounded the area, captured all the men—around 100—and executed them by the roadside without trial. The executions took place in groups from ten in the morning until four in the afternoon. Meanwhile, they also killed any elderly or disabled people they found in their homes who could not flee. Among them was 80-year-old Dim. Mathioudakis, who was killed in his bed, and Emm. Grisbolakis, paralyzed since birth. The 20-year-old Matheos Sygellakis was also killed by a bayonet inside his house. Of those to be executed, six survived, but three later died from their injuries."

According to the report, 117 people were killed in Amiras alone, with many families mourning the loss of up to ten members. Similar horrors unfolded in the other villages targeted by German reprisals.

See: Nikos Kazantzakis, Ioannis Kalitsounakis and Ioannis Kakridis, *Έκθεσις της Κεντρικής Επιτροπής Διαπιστώσεως Ωμοτήτων εν Κρήτη [Report of the Central Committee for the Determination of Atrocities in Crete], (*Heraklion: Municipality of Heraklion, 1983), 45.

38 In his Memoirs, Bandouvas expressed the opinion that his men killed over 100 of their

enemies:

"During the Battle of Viannos, which lasted approximately five days, according to our information, 453 [men] were killed, but that was not true. They were killed fewer.

They were killed approximately 100 men, maybe more, when the groups [of the guerrillas] entered Viannos province to confront the Germans.

During the Battle of Viannos itself on 12 September, they were killed, one of us, and two were injured. The others were killed in different places inside Viannos and the villages, inside the Germans' area" (Sanoudakis, *Op. Cit.*, 333). However, those claims, compared to the German reports, were false.

39 Kazantzakis, Kalitsounakis and Kakridis, *Op. Cit.,* 53-54.

40 Sanoudakis, *Op. Cit.*, 334.

41 Beevor, *Op. Cit.,* p. 153.

42 Hellenic Army History Directorate, Announcement of German Commander of Crete regarding Bandouvas, 17-11-1943.

43 *Ibid,* p. 153.

44 Hellenic Army History Directorate, Emmanouil Bandouvas' report about the Cretan National Resistance, 20-8-1945.

45 Koukounas, *Op. Cit.,* pp. 130-131.