

Australia's War: 80 years ago this week

13 January 1941



13 January 1941 - London

- On 13th January Mr Churchill minuted the Chiefs of Staff that:
- “the political situation in the Far East does not seem to require, and the strength of our Air Force by no means warrants, the maintenance of such large forces in the Far East at this time.”



13 - 17 January 1941 - Athens

- Wavell conferred with the Greek Premier, General Metaxas (photo), and the CinC, General Papagos, in Athens from the 13th to the 17th January, and offered British ground forces to help against possible German aggression.
- The offer was declined because the landing of British forces in Greece would likely provoke German aggression without being strong enough to defeat it.
- The British Government then decided to push on to Benghazi.



13-17 January 1941 - Athens

- Metaxas considered that even two or three divisions would be quite inadequate to the task presented by a German invasion.
- General Papagos, the Greek Commander-in-Chief, said that to establish "a good defensive position and a reasonably strong front" on the Bulgarian frontier reinforcement by nine British divisions with suitable air support would be needed.
- He advised Metaxas in private that the limited aid which Britain was proposing would not only fail to produce substantial military and political results in the Balkans, but would also, from the more general allied point of view, be contrary to the sound principles of strategy In fact, the two or three divisions which it was proposed to withdraw from the Army in Egypt to send to Greece would come in more useful in Africa.

General Papagos (l) and General Wavell (r) in Athens Jan 1941.



14 January 1941 - Libya

- On 14th January Corporal Jarvis, a (No 3 Squadron) wireless operator then attached to No. 208 Squadron, set out with Leading Aircraftman Parr to check wireless equipment in use with artillery units near Tobruk.
- Even under normal circumstances accurate navigation in the featureless desert was difficult, but during a dust storm Jarvis and Parr drove their tender almost on to the guns of the Tobruk defences.
- Jarvis was killed and Parr captured.