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Martin L. van Creveld
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TO MY WIFE

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PREFACE

Although a full scale study of the German campaign in the Balkans of spring 1941 is conspicuously missing from the historical literature on World War II, this work does not aim to fill this gap. Rather, its purpose is to examine the relationship between Hitler's overall strategy during the years 1940-1 on one hand and his policy towards two neighbouring, related countries in southeastern Europe on the other. Thus, it is intended both to examine the effect of Hitler's strategy as a whole on one particular part of his policy, and also to use that part as a measuring rod by means of which it is possible to see whether German strategy in this period conforms to the picture generally painted by modern scholarship. In the process of checking Hitler's strategy as a whole against his policy towards a particular area it was found necessary to throw overboard fairly important bits of the traditional view on both.

This is a study of Hitler's strategy and of a particular part of that strategy. It is thus not concerned with the details of military operations except in so far as they are relevant to that subject. The actual campaigns have therefore been allocated only a few pages and discussed simply in outline. The deployment for these campaigns and subsequent regrouping, on the other hand, have been described in some detail because of their importance in the preparations for Hitler's Russian campaign. This book is therefore the opposite of what one would normally expect from an operational study; much space and attention are devoted to background, preparations and consequences, little to actual military operations.

This study aims to examine the relationship between Hitler's strategy as a whole and his policy towards a particular area. It therefore consists of chapters examining the latter in some detail which alternate with others concerned with a less exacting survey of the former. Although the context and limited scope of this study make it impossible to examine Hitler's strategy in anywhere near sufficient detail to establish new interpretations I did not feel this should prevent me from expressing my views about this subject even when they do not coincide with what is usually believed. However, it was felt that in such cases some documentation at least was necessary, and thus such questions as when Hitler decided to abandon his invasion of the United Kingdom, or what was the nature of his relationship with Russia in

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October–November 1940, are discussed in more detail and with the aid of more documents than would be possible or necessary in a study concerned solely with Hitler's policy towards Greece and Yugoslavia.

For the sake of simplicity, the book is divided into two parts: one dealing with the period from April to November 1940, the other with the one from December 1940 to June 1941. It is assumed that Hitler's greatest worry during the first of these periods was how to solve the English problem, while the Russian problem formed the centre of his interests in the second. This, of course, is to some extent an oversimplification. Hitler was concerned with the problem posed by the Soviet Union long before November 1940, and the English one continued to worry him long after that date. Moreover, the two problems were interrelated in his mind. Yet it would seem that this way of dividing up the sequence of events provides a framework that is more or less adequate in order to understand his policy towards Greece and Yugoslavia, if nothing else. I therefore decided to adhere to it despite all difficulties. By implication, Hitler's objectives in and attitudes to these two countries during the first period must be seen mainly – though not exclusively – as functions of his efforts to defeat England, while his determination to smash Russia largely dictated them during the second. Within this framework, however, almost infinite room for manoeuvre remains. Into this, other factors can, and will, be introduced.

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M. v. C.

ABBREVIATIONS

AOK	Armeeoberkommando
BFOD	British Foreign Office Documents
<i>DBFP</i>	<i>Documents on British Foreign Policy</i>
<i>DGFP</i>	<i>Documents on German Foreign Policy</i>
FCNA	Führer Conferences on Naval Affairs
<i>FRUS</i>	<i>Foreign Relations of the United States</i>
GFM	German Foreign Ministry
g.Kdos	Geheime Kommandosache
GMR	German Military Records
GNR	German Naval Records
IMR	Italian Military Records
IWM	Imperial War Museum
<i>KTB/Halder</i>	<i>Kriegstagebuch/Halder</i>
<i>KTB/OKW</i>	<i>Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommando der Wehrmacht</i>
KTB/SKL	Kriegstagebuch der Seekriegsleitung
ObdH	Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres
OKH/Genst.d.H/Op.Abt.	Oberkommando des Heeres/Generalstab des Heeres/Operationsabteilung
OKL/ObdL	Oberkommando der Luftwaffe/ Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe
OKW/WFSt/Abt.L.	Oberkommando der Wehrmacht/ Wehrmachtführungstab/Abteilung Landesverteidigung
<i>SDFP</i>	<i>Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy</i>
St.S.	Staatssekretär
<i>TMWC</i>	<i>Trial of Major War Criminals</i>
<i>TWC</i>	<i>Trial of War Criminals</i>
Unst.S.	Untersstaatsekretär