

IN GREECE TO-DAY

No Wonder Mussolini Dreams Dreams!

SO Italy has attacked Greece—once again. Something like 2,000 years ago the Romans marched in and took control, and kept it for several centuries. They carried off works of art, but, give them their due, they were over-awed by Greek culture, and as the saying is, were conquered by their captive. In fact, Athens became the Oxford and Cambridge of the Roman world.

Greece is a country of mountains—mountains hard to get across. Then trickling streams sometimes become torrents, and brigands and archaeologists and whoever else may be there are blocked completely. It's the sea that has always been the best way for getting about; and even

Written for "The Listener"
by
IDA LAWSON

big striped bags, and fish, hunks of mutton (room for everything in the rack), live ducks (very well behaved under the seat), guitars, earthenware vessels of water, fruit and bread and cheese for the journey.

Getting to Know the Greeks

You get to know them quickly because they insist on knowing you, and must find out how much your frock cost, and "what is your father's name?" And they look after you and point out "the ruins" and persuade you to get off and see the

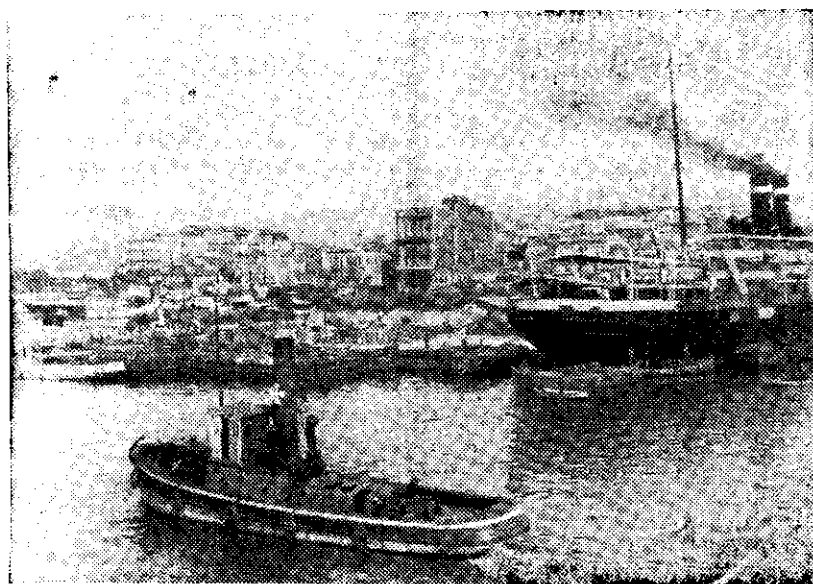
map shows why any Mediterranean power should want Crete. But Italy wants the Piraeus too—the Piraeus that has been the port of Athens since time immemorial. As you sail in the narrow entrance to join the company of ships—big ships, little ships, swell, jaded, friendly ships—you think of all that's come and gone there—people and merchandise and fleets—yes, even the ships that put out to defeat the array of Persia that threatened Greece so direly.

Over the Hill—Athens!

Well, you land to shoutings and tootings and arm wavings, and soon find that the Piraeus has its Customs like any port, and lots of men in uniform who want to know about you; but it's not a New Zealand port, for there are cafes with tables on the street instead of dingy pubs, and flat-roofed, pale, stone buildings, and a dry yellow brown dustiness. And Athens is only a few miles away over the hill—at the other end of the underground or half underground. Athens! With the Acropolis awaiting you and the Athenians sitting at cafe tables on the pavement, very smart: the men you can see want to be immaculate and the women chic. Now they have tea and ices as well as ouzes (a bit like aniseed) and Turkish coffee. Perhaps "Snow White" is on and "King Lear," and they're playing Beethoven's 5th Symphony; but round the corner someone's singing a Turkish song in a voice unmistakably of the east. Athens is not Oriental, but it isn't Western, though an American said he felt so much at home in the drug stores there.



SUN AND SHADOW in the Parthenon. Looking along the colonnade from the east end.



THE PIRAEUS, with its company of big ships and little ships, has been the port of Athens since time immemorial

now you see the little harbours full of ships—painted ships with coloured sails that make you want to drift off in them and cruise among the Aegean Isles as long as Mediterranean suns and moons keep shining. Now, of course, there are roads and railways winding and climbing by olive groves and cypresses and vineyards, round bays, past ancient temple columns, mediæval convents, modern villages. Some of the country roads are like water-courses, but that's nothing to a Greek driver, and besides there are always mules. You see them, the mules, half buried under huge baskets and perhaps a man—a sun-bronzed peasant who wears a short skirt (this may sound funny but it looks well)—and he sings, and the mule now and then gives that being-murdered-sounding neigh or whatever it is. As for the railways—well, they're fun; because when you're at large in Greece time doesn't matter; and if you should happen to be held up for three hours you just go on being alive very happily, talking to people, listening to a violin. The people go third-class (very cheap). In they come with their

romantic cave with the sulphur spring (most horrible smell—beyond anything at Rotorua). Often someone is produced who speaks French—it's rather a second language, and anyone with any pretensions knows it, and sometimes a man who looks as if he's never been far from his native village breaks in upon you in broken American. (Oh yes, he was there for ten years.)

Boats really give more scope for making friends. There you are, perhaps with a night before you under Grecian stars, hearing the swish of the (calm if you're lucky) sea and sounds of music, with families camped around you on striped rugs and their cat and babies and things all there.

"Italy Wants It"

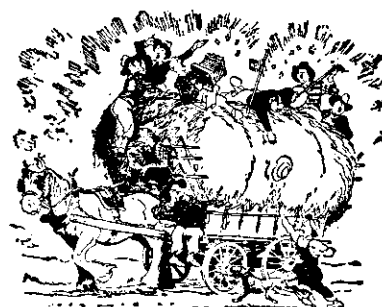
Crete: Yes, Italy wants it. The Romans were there, too. . . . Oh hill-sides of vineyards, white dusty roads and grey green olive trees, mountains rising from the sea; and walls of palaces built before any in Greece, painted vases, all the elegant women painted and the snake goddess. . . . One look at the

THERE'S HISTORY IN THEM THAR HILL-BILLIES . . .

HILL-BILLY music, you may or may not be happy to hear, has many cherished and honourable traditions, and a history which goes back more than 400 years. In its true form it is straight-from-the-heart folk music; the hill-billies who have spread gelatinously over American stage, and screen, and radio, during the past few years are, for the most part, an exaggerated expression of a popular craze. Hill-billies will die out, but hill-billy music will almost certainly go on.

The history of this form of music goes back to the first English pioneering families which thrust into the backwoods of unknown America in search of good farm land. Many eventually penetrated into the mountains, there to struggle for existence almost completely cut off from the outside world.

For generations these people saw no one but a few immediate neighbours. With difficulty they would meet occasionally in each other's homes and there, to the accompaniment of an old fiddle, they would sing the songs they had brought with them from England. Not all of them were musicians; the tunes changed in part, and new words were put to the old airs.



(Courtesy "Radio Times")

None of the true hill-billy songs are modern; almost all are adaptations of very old songs. For instance, "The Butcher Boy" has been traced back 400 years, and "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'," that popular song of 15 years back, was being sung in Nebraska in 1870.

It was with the coming of the railroad to America that the world first began to encroach upon the hill-billies. Then cowboy songs began to be mixed with the original music, and eventually an old man named Riley Puckett was dragged from his mountain fastnesses to make hill-billy gramophone records.

Many combinations of hill-billy singers have sprung up in American radio, but few present the genuine old songs with such fidelity as the American Hill-Billies, who are heard every Saturday night at 8 o'clock from 22B.