

Stephan D. Yada-Mc Neal

Operation Merkurs

The conquest of Crete and its consequences, seen through the camera of Franz-Peter Weixler



With over 200 almost unknown photos and 17 color pictures

Extended new edition

I would like to thank the
Weixler-Franze family.

Thank you for the many insights into this
Life of Franz-Peter Weixler

- thanks for the permission the pictures of the
father's,
grandfather's, father-in-law's for this and
to use other books

- thank you for the approval of
Franz-Peter Weixler published books
to be able to make it public again

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Preface

The tragic images of the shooting of innocent civilians in Kondomari Crete, by German paratroopers are known worldwide. But hardly anyone knows the photographer, the man Franz-Peter Weixler.

In the English-speaking countries, perhaps the images are still known that show a violent firefight between British soldiers and paratroopers. Also, the capture of the soldiers, their faces, the despair in their faces, can be found in almost every book or article.

However, the photographs of the German "propaganda photographer" differ in many ways from the other pictures of German war correspondents. In Weixler's pictures there is sympathy for the victims, compassion and misunderstanding, which caused his comrades.

We know more than 1,500 pictures alone from April 1941 to June 1941. Pictures showing the invasion of Greece, the advance of the German army, the conquest of Theassaloniki, Larissa and Athens. He made nearly 100 pictures alone in the English POW camp of Corinth, where he again did not portray the prisoners condescendingly. But all this will be another, a new book.

Step by step, the reader, the observer of this book, can follow the evolution of the Cretan Battle. Weixler shows the mountain hunters not as the radiant heroes, but as people

with doubts and fears in the eyes. He shows her progress, but also the death that follows every war.

Whether British or German soldier, whether British or German soldier grave, Weixler makes no difference about the cruelty of the war.

But this very point of view of the German, his sympathy, would have almost become a fatal fatality, because the military leadership, the Nazis could not and did not want under any circumstances that such images as they were made in Kondomari, come to the public.

Thrown out of the Wehrmacht, arrested by the Gestapo and thrown in jail, he actually expected a death sentence that could not be carried out only by the fortunate coincidence that the files were baffled in an Allied bombing raid.

And after the war it was the same paratroopers as General Gericke, then in Crete, the direct supervisor of that Horst Trebes, who led the shooting of Kondomari, who tried that the images are not publicly available.

But Franz-Peter Weixler would not have remained himself if he had not objected. Already in 1957 he traveled with journalists to Kondomari and those men, whom he had saved the life at that time showed their gratitude.

For me, Franz-Weixler is a silent hero, who with this book and others should find his due acknowledgment

Stephan D. Yada-Mc Neal

Franz Peter Weixler (born 31.8.1899 in Munich, died 23.4.1971 in Bad Reichenhall) was involved as a photographer of the Wehrmacht in the invasion of Crete.



Photo thankfully provided by the family.
Publication only with their permission

Education and profession

Weixler attended secondary school and studied banking science at the commercial college in Berlin. He participated in the First World War and in 1919 became a member of the Free Corps Epp. From 1922 to 1924 he headed the stock exchange and securities department of Creditbank for industry and agriculture in Berlin. Subsequently, he was until 1926 director of Reichsbundbank AG and from 1926 to 1930 co-owner of the Baukommandite Weixler & Co in Berlin. From 1930 he was director of the branch of the Prussian Landespfandbriefanstalt in Munich and was released there in 1937 for political reasons. From 1937 to 1939 he worked without a permanent job as a photographer and writer.

Wehrmacht and dismissal

From 1939 he was a member of the German Wehrmacht and participated in the 2nd World War until he was released in 1941 for political reasons. He was demoted and classified as 'unwieldy'. In 1943 he was arrested again, from January 1944 to April 1945, he was charged with disintegrating military power and violating the Heimtückegesetz.

On June 2, 1941, he documented with a series of photos the shooting of 23 unarmed Greek civilians in the small Cretan village Kondomari by German soldiers, who was named by them in retaliation for alleged Greek atrocities on German paratroopers.

Creating such photos and even uncensored to show unauthorized persons, was considered a disintegration of military forces and should be punished under martial law with death. Weixler was denounced, arrested and spent in March 1944 on the charge of high treason and continued destruction of military forces in the Munich prison Neudeck. After these records were burned during the war, the process

was delayed until the end of the war and the photographer escaped conviction.

Political engagement before the war

Weixler was active before 1933 in Catholic associations and a member of the Christian trade unions. He was also a member of the BVP and its economic advisory board. In 1933 he became a member of the NSDAP and the SS, in March 1934 he was expelled. He was a member of various resistance groups. In 1934 he was arrested and a special court case was brought against him, which was discontinued because of an amnesty.

Political engagement after the war

Weixler participated in the founding of the CSU in Krailing and was a delegate to the state committee and the state assembly of the CSU.

(Source: Wikipedia <http://www.kreta-wiki.de/wiki/Weixler>)

Departure to Crete

As we know from the nearly 1,000 pictures made by Franz-Peter Weixler, he was already on the move in Poland in 1939 as a so-called "propaganda war correspondent" with the mountain fighters.

Also, the numerous images of the Greek campaign clearly show, as well as the already mentioned book "Fight and intrigue for Greece", that he was assigned to the mountain fighters.

On the following pages, however, not only the departure for Crete and the flight with the JU 52 is shown, but also pictures, as the first wounded German soldier were brought from the hard-fought Crete.

Again, it can be seen that many of the images from various publications were either assigned to other people or published without a name.

Pictures of the Federal Archives or the German Historical Museum bear the archive numbers. All other images were taken from the Internet, and there can be no copyright infringement, as they were not properly assigned to the photographer.

Some of the pictures were given a title by Franz-Peter Weixler, who sometimes deals with the linguistic usage of the time. I have renounced these titles in this section, because they would not reflect the real thoughts of Franz-Peter Weixler.

Annotation

Some of the pictures were given a title by the photographer. However, these titles are written in the usual propaganda language and difficult to translate. So do not be surprised if sometimes a strange title stands below the picture.



DHM- Schönstein PK 3107



DHM-Schönstein PK 3092



DHM-Schönstein PK 3093



DHM-Schönstein PK 3096



DHM-Schönstein PK 3104



DHM-Schönstein PK 3108





Bundesarchiv: Bild183-L19017, Mountain hunters before starting to Crete





IWM



Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-1981-159-22
Foto: o. Ang. | o. Dat.

