

OCTOBER 28th – OXI Day



“Until now we used to say that the Greeks fight like heroes. Now we shall say: The heroes fight like Greeks.” (Radio broadcast October 1940, in the first days of the Greco-Italian war).

“The word heroism I am afraid does not render the least of those acts of self-sacrifice of the Greeks, which were the defining factor in the victorious outcome of the common struggle of the nations, during WWII, for the human freedom and dignity. If it were not for the bravery of the Greeks and their courage, the outcome of WWII would be undetermined.” (British Parliament, April 24, 1941).

Winston Churchill

October 28th is known to all Greeks as Oxi Day, (“O-hee Day”) and commemorated as a holiday in Greece and all Greek communities around the world. It is the second most significant celebration for modern Greek history, after Greek Independence Day on March 25. On October 28, Greeks worldwide commemorate the “No” rejection of Greek General Metaxas, during World War II, toward Italian Dictator Benito Mussolini and his ultimatum to surrender.

Metaxas held his position and refused to allow the Axis Powers to enter Greece without a struggle, refusing to let them in without a fight. Even though Metaxas’ answer to the ultimatum was rendered as “No” or “Oxi” in Greek, his actual response was “Alors, c’est la guerre,” which translates to “Then it is war.” Greece went to war with Italy as a result, which led to the outbreak of World War II overall. The Greek people were mostly in favour of the war and thought Metaxas had shown bravery, despite the fact that we do know that his action was what ultimately pushed Greece into battle.

The Greco-Italian War II began after Metaxas refused to allow the Axis to take control of some of the most strategically important territories in Greece. When Metaxas rejected Mussolini’s ultimatum on October 28, 1940, the war was said to have formally begun. It continued until April 23, 1941.

The expulsion of the Italians from Greek territory raised spirits around the world, not just for the Greeks in Greece. They interpreted the Greek triumph as proof that the Axis could be defeated. The bravery of the Greeks was admired by people all around the world, and it appeared to give the Allies fresh hope that they could defeat the Axis. However, Axis Powers returned to Greece and the country was occupied by the German Nazis for a time.

Today, there are Greek "OXI" parades held all around Greece, North America, Australia, Germany, and in other countries with Greek communities of diaspora. Greece entered World War II as a result of this move, but people all throughout the world respected Greece's valour for resisting the Axis. Greece did ultimately fall under Axis rule, but the world was impressed by Greece's valour in pivotal conflicts like the Battle of Crete. This is the first time a nation has successfully resisted the Axis Powers. The Greek defeat over the Italian axis in Greece played a major role in delaying Hitler and bringing an end to World War II and the defeat of evil axis of Hitler and Nazi Germany.

President Franklin Roosevelt said, "When the entire world had lost all hope, the Greek people dared to question the invincibility of the German monster raising against it the proud spirit of freedom." Life Magazine and other magazines around the world featured Greece on their covers.

Hitler was forced into the terrible Russian winter, where he met his defeat, as a result of Greece upsetting his war schedule. Greece is credited by leaders such as Winston Churchill, Joseph Stalin, and American Sumner Welles with bringing about Hitler's downfall. Even Nazi General Wilhelm Keitel, Adolph Hitler's chief of staff stated: "The German attack against Russia was delayed by two or more crucial months by the Greeks; if we had not had this lengthy delay, the outcome of the war would have been different," stated Keitel. During World War II, Greece was the only "David" capable of inflicting a mortal wound that ultimately took down the Nazi "Goliath."