

## BATTLE OF CRETE REMEMBERED

On 20 May 1941 German airborne divisions attacked Crete after the Nazi juggernaut had rolled through mainland Greece. Although the Germans met stubborn resistance from Australian, New Zealand and British forces on the island, together with Greek and local Cretan fighters, the battle was over within a few short weeks.

The naval battle that was played at sea also saw the sinking on 21 May 1941 of the *HMS Gloucester* whose surviving crew members managed to reach Kythera before being taken away to a German prisoner of war camp. Many locals recall the sounds of Stuka bombers as they pounded the British cruiser into submission.

The memory of all those brave young men who valiantly fought to defend Greece has never been forgotten and each year the Battle of Crete is commemorated both here and in Greece.

So it was with a profound sense of reverence and respect that Victor Kepreotis and George Vardas represented the Kytherian Association of Australia at the recent wreath-laying ceremony at the Cenotaph in Martin Place, Sydney marking the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Crete.

As the poem by Yiannis Ritsos in his *Romiossyni* work (famously set to music by Mikis Theodorakis) declares:

Σώπα, ὅπου νᾶναι θὰ σηµάνουν οἱ καµπάνες.  
Αὐτὸ τὸ χῶμα εἶναι δικό τους καὶ δικό μας.  
Κάτου ἀπ' τὸ χῶμα, μὲς στὰ σταυρωµένα χέρια τους  
κρατᾶνε τῆς καµπάνας τὸ σκοινὶ - περµένουνε τὴν ὥρα,  
δὲν κοινοῦνται,  
περµένουν νὰ σηµάνουν τὴν ἀνάσταση.  
Τοῦτο τὸ χῶμα εἶναι δικό τους καὶ δικό μας - δὲ µπορεῖ  
κανεὶς νὰ µᾶς τὸ πάρει.

*Hush, soon the bells will ring  
This soil is theirs and ours.  
Below the earth, in their folded hands  
they hold the bell rope – waiting for the time, not  
sleeping,  
waiting to mark the resurrection. This earth  
is theirs and ours - no one can take it from us.*

May their memory be eternal.

**George Vardas**



Editor's Note: I found these quotes on the website: [www.WarriorsofGreece.com](http://www.WarriorsofGreece.com).

Greeks throughout history, faced adversity with strength and courage, determined to change their circumstances for the benefit of their beloved homeland. Unfortunately, in 2011, all those noble sentiments seem to be missing in action. (Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill would be spinning in their graves).

## Quotes About Greek Fighting Prowess in World War II

***"Until now we used to say that the Greeks fight like heroes. Now we shall say: The heroes fight like Greeks."***

-Winston Churchill (From a speech he delivered from the BBC in the first days of the Italian invasion of Greece during WWII that was ferociously repulsed by undermanned, poorly equipped but patriotic, hard-core Greek guerilla fighters)

***"For the sake of historical truth I must verify that only the Greeks, of all the adversaries who confronted us, fought with bold courage and highest disregard of death."***

-Adolf Hitler (From a speech he gave at the Reichstag, 4 May 1941) after his previously unbeaten storm troopers suffered tremendous casualties in their battle for Greece.

***"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 World War II, for the human freedom and dignity. If it were not for the bravery of the Greeks and their courage, the outcome of World War II would be undetermined."***

-Winston Churchill (speech to British Parliament, 24 April 1941)

***"You fought unarmed and won, small against big. We owe you gratitude, because you gave us time to defend ourselves. As Russians and as people we thank you."***

-Moscow, Radio Station when Hitler attacked the U.S.S.R.

***"I am sorry because I am getting old and I shall not live long to thank the Greek People, whose resistance decided World War II."***

-Joseph Stalin (From a speech of his broadcast by the Moscow radio station on 31 January 1943 after the victory of Stalingrad and the capitulation of German 6th Army Field Marshal Von Paulus)

***"On the 28th of October 1940 Greece was given a deadline of three hours to decide on war or peace but even if a three day or three week or three year were given, the response would have been the same. The Greeks taught dignity throughout the centuries. 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."***

-Franklin D Roosevelt, US President 1933 - 1945

***"The heroic struggle of the Greek people... Against Germany's attack, after she so thunderously defeated the Italians in their attempt to invade the Greek soil, filled the hearts of the American people with enthusiasm and moved their compassion."***

-Franklin D Roosevelt, US President 1933 - 1945