

28 Oct 1940: The Nemesis of the Axis

Written by Aristotelis Administration
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The 28th October 1940, known to most English speakers as “OHI DAY”, marks the involvement of the Greek people in the Second World War. On this day, the then Italian dictator Mussolini commenced hostilities against Greece in order to occupy the Balkans and provide military support and access to the Balkan areas for Germany and Hitler. On Saturday 28th October, Greece and Greeks celebrate one of the most important events in their contemporary history.

Italy, a member of the Axis, undertakes the “responsibility” to occupy the Balkan countries and by extension the island of Crete that would provide the stepping stone for access to the Middle East.

The Italian army took over most of the Balkan countries without much resistance but failed to make any inroads in its fight against Greece.

The Albanian border and the Greek mountainous areas proved to be the nemesis of the arrogant Italian military might.

The Italian Ambassador Grazzi requests that his country’s military to ‘passes’ through Greece and advance towards the Middle East. The Italian ultimatum stated that the Greek borders be accessible by 6.00am on 28th October 1940.

The Greek government and the entire Greek nation responded with a thunderous “OHI” (NO).

By 5.30 of the same morning the Italian army commenced hostilities at the Greek-Albanian border but it was met by stern resistance by the under-prepared and ill equipped Greek army. The Greek army inflicted the first defeat to the members of the Axis and left the rest of the world dumbfounded for the heroism displayed in the high and snowed under mountains of the boarder.

A small nation with a big heart had achieved the impossible!!!!!!

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It was this display of heroism and bravery that caused the then British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to state that “from now on we should not say that the Greeks fought like heroes, but the heroes fight like Greeks”. Such accolades about the Hellenic resistance and resilience in the face of adversity kept on pouring in. The Greeks have learnt over thousands of years to defend their land, as Leonidas did in Thermopylae, Diakos and many other heroes in 1821, and in our more recent history during the Balkan conflicts in 1912-13.

The small nation showed bravery of massive proportions and this became evident when it took the military might of the Axis six months to overcome our resistance, thus delaying significantly the advancement of the Italians and the Germans towards the Middle East. Many historians suggest that such delay proved to be the catalyst in the ultimate defeat of the Nazis and their comrades.