

FILM

The 11th Day to premier on Long Island in Port Jeff

Film chronicles the Cretan resistance movement during World War II

BY ELLEN BARCEL

Reaching back into high school or college history classes, most of us remember that during World War II the "overrun" countries of Europe did not go quietly into their fate. Resistance movements were widespread, perhaps the best known being that of the French and Dutch underground.

But one resistance movement, that of the residents of the island of Crete, taken by Germany in 1941 and held until the Germans withdrew in 1944, has not been widely known. Although Winston Churchill is credited with saying, "Until now, we knew that Greeks were fighting like heroes; from now on we shall say that the heroes fight like Greeks." American history books reflect little of this struggle.

How many Americans are aware of the fact that more than half of the 8,000 elite German paratroopers who descended on the island were decimated in the first 48 hours of the Battle of Crete or that the only successful kidnapping of a German general, that of General Kreipe, took place on Crete, orchestrated by British intelligence officer Patrick Leigh Fermor and carried out by Cretan guerrillas? The resistance movement in Crete was the most successful of any during World War II.

Writer/producer Michael Epperson and director Christos Epperson have



Illustration courtesy of Archangel Films

The 11th Day will have its Long Island premier at the Greek Church of the Assumption in Port Jefferson on Saturday, February 18 at 3 and 6 pm.

gone a long way toward filling the void with the production of *The 11th Day*, a 72-minute documentary which chronicles the Cretan resistance struggle. The Eppersons, whose great aunts and uncles were themselves Cretan resistance fighters, use a three-pronged approach to telling this important story.

In addition to using rare unpublished photos and previously unseen footage of the Battle of Crete, they interview many who took part in the

resistance movement, including Fermor (his first on-camera interview in over 50 years), and veterans from Greece, England, France and the United States. In addition, where no footage was available, they re-enacted events, using young Cretan villagers to portray their own grandparents.

Despite working with a very limited budget (\$650,000 — one would easily expect a budget three or four times that amount or more), these young film-

makers have produced a work called by U.S. Congressman Mike Bilirakis, "an extraordinary film."

The title of the film, *The 11th Day*, comes from the fact that the initial Battle of Crete lasted for 10 days. The Cretan resistance fighters noted that "there would be an 11th day and they will pay," the 11th day being the ongoing resistance to the German invasion of the island, a resistance, made up of men, women and even children.

For anyone interested in World War II history, Greek history or simply a glowing example of the indomitable human spirit, *The 11th Day* is highly recommended. Yes, there are some scenes of graphic violence, but then war is a violent activity. Parents of young children should be cautioned.

The 11th Day, produced by Archangel Films, will have its Long Island premier on Saturday, February 18 with two showings, 3 and 6 pm, at the Greek Church of the Assumption, 430 Sheep Pasture Road, Port Jefferson.

Tickets are \$10 each. Refreshments and snacks can be purchased at the church. Tickets are available either directly from the church (call 473-0894) or through their website at www.kimisis.org.

For further information on the film itself, go to www.crete1941.com.

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