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GROUNDBREAKING WW II DOCUMENTARY FILM ON CIVILIAN INSURGENCY

_The men, women, and children who took on Hitler's most elite soldiers... and won._

SACRAMENTO, CA – It's a film that Chase Brandon, a 30 year veteran operative of the CIA, has proclaimed “one of the greatest untold stories of World War II.” Columnist John Kass of the _Chicago Tribune_ and _Newsday_ rallied his readers to the Chicago premiere of this “stirring documentary,” telling them, “if you're interested in what fuels an insurgency--and the news is full of that today--you'll want to see this film.”

U.S. Congressman Michael Bilirakis has hailed it as “an extraordinary film,” so moved by the story that he invited director-producer Christos Epperson and writer-producer Michael Epperson to present a special preview to fellow members of Congress in Washington D.C. last year. It has since been acquired for exhibition by America's national World War II museum, The National D-Day Museum, and is currently on a worldwide tour in theaters across America, Canada, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand.

_The 11th Day_ chronicles the story of the men, women, and children of the Cretan civilian resistance movement and their relentless battle against Nazi occupation forces from 1941-1945—a battle which inspired Churchill to proclaim, “Until now, we knew that Greeks were fighting like heroes; from now on we shall say that the heroes fight like Greeks.” Their stories are told first hand, and on-location, through exclusive interviews with the resistance fighters themselves. Some were just child recruits at the time, boys and girls; others were seasoned veterans, and still others were the Allied soldiers and British intelligence operatives who fought alongside them. Together, they would inflict upon Germany its first major defeat of the war, decimating half of Hitler's 8,000 elite airborne assault troops in the first 48 hours. Cretan civilians fought alongside their comrades from England, Australia, and New Zealand throughout 10 fateful days in May 1941. Once the Germans took over the island, the Cretan people rallied to their first acts of resistance the following day: They risked and gave their lives to help the Allied soldiers escape.

In the first months of Nazi occupation, thousands of Cretans were randomly executed to stamp out the resistance movement before it could grow. Families were sent to the concentration camps. Entire villages were burned to the ground. Yet unlike other European resistance efforts which quickly yielded to German pacification—the celebrated French and Dutch among them—Crete’s civilian population never gave up; they locked German soldiers into a state of continuous and relentless conflict in a single location for over four years, drawing in thousands of additional German troops with each passing year. By 1944, that number would exceed 100,000. Yet despite this brute force of numbers, and the brutal terror those numbers would unleash upon the population, the Cretan people never stopped fighting. To the contrary: They would kidnap the commander in chief of German forces on Crete—the famous abduction of General Kreipe, masterminded and led by British Special Operations officer Patrick Leigh Fermor. It was the only successful kidnapping of a German general throughout the war.

Fermor's participation in the film marks his first on-camera interview in over 50 years—just one reason why so many World War II historians and enthusiasts have been so eagerly anticipating the film's debut. Another reason for the film's robust fan base is that the story of the film’s creation is as much of an underdog story as the film itself. Produced on a limited budget with a crew of just four young filmmakers in their 20s and 30s, _The 11th Day_ was shot...
on-location in multiple countries—from battle re-enactments filmed in the rugged mountains of Crete, where young villagers portrayed their own grandparents in the battles they fought, to interview segments with veterans in Greece, England, France, and the United States.

“Producers and studio executives have asked us whether our budget was closer to 1.5 or 2 million,” says director Christos Epperson. “I tell them it was around $650,000. Their eyes bug out. They ask what editing companies we used, how we managed these big battle scenes, what marketing firm does our website and promo and film tour... I reply, ‘me, my brother Mike, Ian, and Jordan, and Eric who runs the office. And mom, of course.’ They can’t believe it.” The film’s main financial backer, San Diego Charges owner Alex Spanos, explained, “I gave them around $500,000 for this project—and happily. This is one of the most important and yet least commemorated stories of World War II. And what those kids were able to do with that budget...the scope and artistry of the film...it just blows away so many films that cost four or five times as much, with ten times the crew. They really pulled off something magical.” Spanos, a son of Greek immigrants and himself a World War II veteran, added, “But most amazing is that these two Greek brothers, these two young guys are hocking their cars, maxing their credit cards and living on junk food to finish and tour this film, all to preserve the memories of people generations older than them.”

Writer-producer Michael Epperson explains, “Well, in one sense it’s not unusual at all. These people whose stories we’re telling...Leigh Fermor who kidnapped General Kreipe, or George Tzikas who continually threw himself into impossible battles with little hope for survival... These guys were our age when they did these things. That heroism and sacrifice should have as much meaning for our generation as for theirs. Unfortunately, though, in the case of the Cretan resistance movement, these stories have gone largely untold. Yes, they’re recorded in the official records, but they haven’t been widely shared with younger generations. Now we’re at the point where as these people begin to pass away, the chance to hear their stories in their voices is passing away with them. That’s the real fuel driving us on this project.”

The film's producers share a deeply personal connection to its subject: The great aunts and uncles of Christos and Michael Epperson were themselves Cretan resistance fighters who were captured and sent to the Nazi concentration camp at Dachau. “Why these stories have gone untold and uncelebrated for so long, I really can’t fathom,” says Christos Epperson. “All I can say is that Greeks of my generation and my parents’ generation have really dropped the ball. We all know the stories privately because they’re part of our family histories. But they need to be part of the public history of the war, too. That’s what our film is all about.”

To that end, the producers have made freely available their unprecedented collection of research material, including over 2000 photos—more than 500 of which are rare and unpublished. It is the largest on-line archive of World War II photos and documents in the world. The entire collection is available free of charge on the film's website, www.The11thDay.com.

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