



# THE GREEK CAMPAIGN

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**"THE GREEKS ALWAYS MADE IT OBVIOUS THAT WE WERE THEIR PEOPLE AND THEY TREATED US LIKE THEIR OWN".**

The above words were uttered by Henry Jo Gullet, a WW2 Veteran, Politician & Ambassador to Greece. He fought during the Greek campaign. Another Officer (Alex Sheppard) who witnessed the ANZACS leaving the Greek mainland remembered their immortal words of the Greeks: 'If you have to leave your wounded behind, leave them to us and we will take of them'.

Now for those who are sitting back home in the comfort of their surroundings, reflect for one moment the above words by two veterans now since gone and what they mean to the relatives of those sons and daughters who fought a strategic withdrawal from Greece. Imagine what it is like for a chap like me, born in Greece, raised in Australia and holding high the torch of the ANZAC spirit.

My grumpy old military mates (I love them dearly) would look at me and tell me: "She will be right mate, your OK". Others would be looking down from that heavenly jungle and saying: "There goes Pete Greek being bloody emotional again". Many throughout the Commonwealth countries may have selected yesterday to commemorate the Battle for Greece and Crete a battle which unfortunately has been hijacked by various communities and organisations with their association to the island of Crete.

With the utmost respect to the fallen warriors, their families and those associated with the Battle for Crete, let me put this matter to rest once and for all. It is not just the Battle for Crete but a bitter and strategic withdrawal involving many battles on the Greek mainland that had its climax on the island of Crete. Therefore, the campaign is the Battle of Greece of which Crete is part of. Many Greeks of military and civilian background also risked their lives and paid dearly for assisting the ANZACS.

Far more sporadic battles occurred on the mainland of Greece than on the island of Crete itself. The reason why the Battle for Crete has taken on a more public face is because it has been mooted that the Battle was responsible for delaying Hitler's plans for invading Russia. However as much as we all want to believe this and due respect to the fallen, studies and investigations after the war indicated that the Greek campaign and subsequently the Battle for Crete did not affect Hitler's plans to attack and invade Russia.

It was a mere distraction for Hitler and his military planners who for months planned into preparing the invasion of Russia. The Greek campaign was a moral and war propaganda boost for the Allies who until then had not won a victory against the Axis powers. The tiny nation of Greece, alone fought Mussolini's troops in the snowy mountains of Albania and defeated them. This act alone was enough for Hitler to be distracted from his planned invasion of Russia. Hitler, Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt paid tribute to the fighting warrior abilities of the Greeks. High praise from Hitler himself did not go unnoticed but in the end more civilians died at the hands of the NAZI occupier.

As for my contribution, it is small indeed. I had a mate ring me from Australia yesterday wondering whether I had commemorated the Battle for Crete. I said no I did not and once again state that it was not just the Battle for Crete. Yesterday I celebrated the Greek Orthodox Saints Constantine and Helen religious festival with my two cousins, Panagiota with her son Constantine and her sister Helen. I had attended the Church ceremony early in the morning and lit two candles for my brother and sister back home in Australia. Their names are obviously Constantine and Helen.

Today, however was another day and I rose early to meet the morning sun rising above the hill we call 'Baldy' (Kouremenos) to the East of the Hellenic ANZAC Memorial. (HANZAC). I paid my respects to the fallen, remembered my mates since gone and reflected on my visit to Greece some thirty years ago as a member of Telamon Force. A body of Australian serving men and women selected with their association to the Greek campaign. (But that's another story for another time.) I notice that as I age, I become more emotional but hide my sorrow and sadness within. Why, I do not know why.

That's all for now. Take care. Love you all. Remain vigilant and never give up without a fight. Peter

