

To achieve this objective, Hitler needed the Axis powers to strike British forces in Greece. By conquering Greece, Hitler hoped to gain access to the important connecting link with Italian bases in the Dodecanese islands, giving Italian forces a stranglehold on British forces in Egypt where they were already under attack. The defense of Egypt was vital to Allied positions in the oil-rich Middle East.

On October 28, 1940, the Italian Ambassador in Athens issued an ultimatum to Greek Prime Minister Metaxas, demanding the unconditional surrender of Greece and threatening Italy's declaration of war. Mussolini gave Prime Minister Metaxas only three hours to reply.

Mussolini obviously underestimated the resolve of the Greek people and their passion for liberty. In what has now become one of the most celebrated actions of World War II, Prime Minister Metaxas responded with the word "oxi," which means "no" in Greek.

This statement, which embodied the true spirit of the Greek people, demonstrated undeniable courage and strength in the face of imminent invasion by Italian forces. "Oxi" echoed the same devotion and love of country that Greek patriots exhibited during their war of independence against the Ottoman empire when they defiantly shouted "liberty or death." The Prime Minister's actions marked the beginning of one of the world's most heroic efforts to combat tyranny and oppression. Knowing that Greece would not give in to its demands, Italy invaded.

Greece went into battle as the clear underdog. In addition to having a population seven times smaller than Italy, the disparity in the nations' armed forces was even greater. Italy enjoyed ten times the firepower of Greece in its army and navy and seven times the number of troops. Italy's command of the air gave Greece little hope of success. However, despite their lack of equipment and smaller numbers, the Greek army proved to be well-trained and resourceful. Within a week of the invasion, the Italian forces were suffering serious setbacks.

On November 14, 1940, the Greek army launched a counteroffensive and quickly drove the Italian forces back into Albania. By December, the Greeks had captured the town of Pogradec in eastern Albania, where the fighting continued for several months. It became very clear that the Greeks were not going to stand for defeat. In a last ditch effort to bring the skirmish to a close before they would be forced to ask Hitler to intervene, the Italian armed forces launched another assault on March 12, 1941. It took only six days for them to concede that German intervention was necessary.

Hitler ordered the German invasion of Greece on April 6, 1941, but it took the Germans five weeks to finally end the conflict. This delay proved critical to the outcome of the entire war. Italy's inability to capture Greece enabled the British to win major victories against Mussolini's forces in North Africa, solidifying their positions in the region.

This delay also contributed to the failure of the German Barbarossa campaign to conquer Russia. Because he was forced to capture the Balkans, mainly Yugoslavia and Greece, Hitler had to delay his plans to invade and capture the Soviet Union before the winter of 1941. The Greek resistance, both in Albania and in another famous battle in Crete, altered the

time table of the planned Barbarossa invasion by at least six months, proving a favorable development for Allied Forces.

Perhaps the most important effect the Greeks' unyielding stand had on World War II was guaranteeing that the Germans would not gain the advantage against the British. Although Germany had conquered much of Europe, Hitler's inability to decimate British and Russian forces early in the War would eventually prove fatal. Thanks to Prime Minister Metaxas saying "oxi" and inspiring the heroic Greek resistance, the war tide was permanently changed.

The Allies gained tremendous advantages by the stubborn and proud resolve of the Greek armed forces, but the Greeks themselves suffered loss and sacrificed much. Nearly one million Hellenes died during this time, roughly 14 percent of the population in 1940. And yet, the entire Western world, discouraged and fearful of the Axis powers and increasingly ugly war, were inspired by the Greeks' incredible victories. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill honored these acts of heroism, declaring that "Today we say that Greeks fight like heroes; from now on we will say that heroes fight like Greeks."

Mr. Speaker, "Oxi" Day continues to serve as an inspiration to all those in this world who cherish democracy and freedom. It marks defiance of fascism and ongoing commitment to doing what is right. As a Greek-American, I am proud to honor the memory of those brave patriots who fought for the freedom of their country and in so doing, helped secure it for the entire free world.

Today freedom-loving nations are battling a new enemy, not defined by nation but by hatred of freedom and love of fear and oppression. As we continue to fight the Global War on Terror, we should take a page from Prime Minister Metaxas and the Greek people and echo their resolute "no" to those who threaten liberty. By doing so, we honor the spirit of "Oxi" Day and all those who have sacrificed to defend freedom.

IN RECOGNITION OF SENATOR GEORGE ONORATO

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 29, 2006

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Senator George Onorato, an outstanding New Yorker and a great American. For more than half a century, George Onorato has distinguished himself as a dedicated public servant devoted to his family, his State, and his country.

Senator Onorato is an accomplished and hardworking legislator who is well respected by his colleagues. After his election to the New York State Senate in 1983, he successfully sponsored legislation benefitting seniors, consumers, tenants, Medicare patients, the environment, and current and former members of the U.S. armed forces. George Onorato has held positions in Senate leadership since 1992, and currently serves as Vice Chair of the Minority Conference, as a member of the Policy Committee of the Senate Democratic Conference, and as the Ranking Member of the Committee on Insurance. Because of his

leadership on issues affecting the environment and air quality, he was appointed Co-Chairman of the State Senate's Democratic Task Force on Energy & Conservation. Senator Onorato also serves on the Minority Task Force on Waterfront Development, a platform he has used to promote one of his most cherished goals, creating more affordable housing for the elderly and for moderate and low income New Yorkers. He is a past President of the Conference of Italian American Legislators.

In addition to his tenure in the State Legislature, Senator Onorato has distinguished himself in service to his country. He served in the United States Army, 118th Medical Battalion from 1950 to 1952, and was awarded a Presidential Citation. To this day, he remains a champion for veterans and their families as well as current members of the armed forces. As a member of the Senate Minority Task Force on Vietnam Veterans and the Acting Ranking Minority Member of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, Senator Onorato was a sponsor of legislation providing student aid to Vietnam veterans, and in 1997 introduced legislation to increase the level of such funding. He sponsored and supported legislation to help develop a data base for research on dioxin-related birth defects of children born to Vietnam veterans. In 2003, Senator Onorato was one of the founders of the bipartisan New York State Armed Forces Legislative Caucus, which he currently co-chairs.

Just as noteworthy as his dedication to public service, George Onorato is a devoted and loving family man. He is married to the former Athena Georgakakos. They have three adult children, Joanne, George and Janice, and six grandchildren. His wife regularly accompanies him to legislative sessions in Albany, where the two of them are a universally admired and inseparable couple.

Senator Onorato and his wife are equally devoted to their community. A lifelong resident of Astoria, Senator Onorato, is active in numerous civic organizations. Since 1972, he has served as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Taminent Regular Democratic Club, one of the largest and most prominent Democratic Clubs in our nation's greatest city. Senator Onorato has also served as a Democratic Leader of the 36th Assembly District since 1977.

Mr. Speaker, in recognition of his courageous wartime service to our country in the United States Army, to the people of the State of New York, and to his beloved family, I ask that my distinguished colleagues join me to pay tribute to the enormous contributions to civic life made by the Honorable George Onorato.

HONORING SENATOR WESLEY
CHESBRO, CALIFORNIA STATE
SENATE, DISTRICT 2, HUMBOLDT
COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 29, 2006

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize State Senator Wesley Chesbro of Arcata, who is being honored for his 32 years of public service to the people of California.