

THE PRIDE OF OXI DAY

October 28th

The magnificent Greek holiday Oxi Day is celebrated every year in Greece on October 28th and mostly remembered for general Ioannis Metaxas' strong reply of 'Oxi' (no) to Mussolini's request to allow Italian troops to come into Greece at the beginning of WW II. The result of this stern message was powerful, and in the end, helped to maintain Greece's course of neutrality for generations to come. Nevertheless, the Italians did invade Greece, but were subsequently driven back into Albania.

The story begins in 1935, when King George II was restored to the Greek throne by a rigged plebiscite, where he made the right-wing general Ioannis Metaxas prime minister. Nine months later, Metaxas assumed dictatorial powers with the king's consent under the pretext of preventing a communist-inspired republican coup. The October 28 national holiday also marks the date in 1940 when Greece entered WWII.

On that cherished day in Greek history, Prime Minister Ioannis Metaxas not only rejected Italy's ultimatum, he chose the road of resistance, and thus saved his reputation as a dictator. Cypriot countrymen also drew inspiration from Greece's refusal to let Italian troops invade in 1940 in the face of continued Turkish aggression. For that matter, parades are also staged by Greek communities around the world in celebration of Oxi Day.

Today in Greece, celebrations of Oxi Day culminate in a large, lavish military parade down the main boulevards of Athens and Thessaloniki. Soldiers, tanks, armoured vehicles and students parade through most Greek cities with an air of pride, and politicians in reviewing stands have an opportunity to show their own spirit to Greece and the resistance and how in future generations it should it should be continued. For tourists and foreigners, it's a proud spectacle to behold, so if you're ever in Greece during that time, be sure and see it!