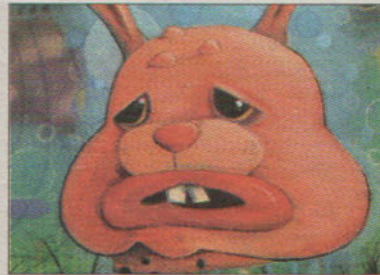




politicos and pundits behind
 profit MOVE AMERICA FORWARD
 want to support the troops.
 critics say they're lining their
 books and feeding their egos.
 BY JEFFREY M. BARKER 26

DOOMSDAY SCENARIOS

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THE LOWDOWN ON LOWBROW

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CRETANS GIVE NAZIS HELL AT THE CREST

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MR. GONZALEZ, TURN DOWN THIS RAISE!

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CAN WE FORGIVE CHARLIZE THERON FOR AEON FLUX?

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Force of will

War, we hear, is good for absolutely nothing, but many documentary filmmakers have found purpose in it. Even now there are still such things as the untold stories of World War II. One, as relayed in Christos and Michael Epperson's *The Eleventh Day: Crete 1941*, has to do with how a rural Greek island persistently frustrated the 100,000 Axis aggressors who spent four bloody years trying to subdue it.

In May 1941, when more than half of the 8,000 elite Nazi paratroopers dropped into Crete were killed within 48 hours of their arrival, the Germans overwhelmed the island with reinforcements, prompting Allied forces to evacuate and leave the locals hopelessly outmatched. The Cretans fought anyway, and hard. Their resistance, unlike those of the French or the Dutch, never ended.

"Like a lot of the other Greek-Americans, I grew up hearing stories of World War II," director Christos Epperson said last week in a call from his Sacramento office. Epperson's great aunt, Eleutheria Xirouhakis, was a resistance spy, executed by German soldiers in 1944. "But it's not just our family's stories," he said, "it's a lot of people's."



Realtor George Tzikas (pictured), a resistance veteran, recalls in Epperson's film how the Nazi attack "made the Cretan heart harder than the German steel, and the Cretan spirit hotter than the German fire." Although Tzikas is a proud and lucid witness bearer onscreen, his appearance required some persuasion from the resolute director. "He was very reluctant, along with a lot of my veterans," Epperson

remembered. "I told him, 'Crete fell but never surrendered.' He said, 'You're right.'"

Another of Epperson's noteworthy and initially reticent participants is the former British Special Operations officer and categorical war hero Patrick Leigh Fermor, with whose help the resistance managed to kidnap its enemy's commanding general. "We just kept calling Fermor," Epperson continued. "He hasn't given an interview in 50 years. The BBC has been trying to get him for, like, 20 years. I met him at his house, and we were talking. He's like, 'Without the Cretans, we would have been destroyed.' I said, 'That's what not in the books.'"

In spite of its historic significance (it is the first film to be screened for Congress), *The Eleventh Day* was a project of limited means. "We're a guerrilla movie. We're only a crew of five, working out of an apartment," Epperson said. Nevertheless, inspired by the higher-stakes, longer-odds project so bravely undertaken by his ancestors, he traveled to Crete to re-enact battles, with the people who fought them portrayed by their own grandchildren. Against adversaries armed with machine guns, "these were men and women and children who came out with farm tools," Epperson said. "And they completely changed the tide of the war." *The Eleventh Day* screens at the Crest Theatre, 1013 K Street, Saturday at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10. Call (916) 973-1120 for more information.

—Jonathan Kiefer
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