

**Yannis Prekatsounakis.** *The Battle for Heraklion. Crete 1941: The Campaign Revealed through Allied and Axis Accounts.* Warwick: Helion and Company Limited, 2017. 304 pp. \$69.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-911096-33-7.



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The Battle for Crete, or the Wehrmacht's Unternehmen Merkur (Operation Mercury), was a major turning point for the Nazi campaign in Greece. What originally appeared to be a victory for the Allies developed into a disastrous defeat, ending with the island succumbing to a Nazi occupation. Although historians of modern Greece and the Second World War have contributed to the growing corpus about the Nazi occupation of Greece and the Battle for Crete more generally, these studies have consistently focused on the cities of Chania and Rethymno in their discussion of the initial invasion and occupation. Yannis Prekatsounakis, a native of Heraklion, uses his rich study of the Battle for Crete to uncover specifically how the battle unfolded in his city of his birth with the goal to “preserve the story of the battle and make every effort to keep alive the memory of such a historic event” (p. 286). In this regard, Prekatsounakis has succeeded by writing a narrative through which a vivid account emerges from the pages that is holistic and free from bias.

If one is looking for the typical historical monograph with an underlying argument and a fresh and innovative intervention into the historiography, this work is not that. In fact, Prekatsounakis produces an intricate account of the battle without a grounding argument. This, however, should not deter the reader interested in the topic nor does it diminish the book's value and informative nature, which is meant clearly to be accessible to a broader audience. To excavate the battle in a digestible manner, Prekatsounakis relies on a plethora of sources including state and military archives, wartime diaries, and unpublished accounts. Prekatsounakis must be lauded for the manner in which he utilizes his sources to piece together a compelling story that addresses nearly every angle, from the logistics of offensive and defensive plans to the minutiae of battle. He peppers the narrative with ample photos, maps, and “special presentations,” which provide personal information and accounts from various involved individuals (German, British, and Greek). His “special presentations” are extremely valuable be-

cause they humanize the battle and engage the reader on a sympathetic and emotional level, something that is often lacking in dense military histories.

The narrative follows the battle chronologically, starting with the Greek reinforcements' trek south through the Aegean from Salonika to Crete, and the initial German invasion via paratroopers. Chapters 2 and 3 address the logistics of the invasion and resistance in Heraklion, as well as the German troop-drop at Gournes and the subsequent battle at Kopsas Hill. The Greek soldiers made a heroic stand at Kopsas Hill, causing the Germans to reformulate invasion plans. In chapters 4 and 5, Prekatsounakis details the battle at the airfield and the attack on Heraklion. There is ample information provided with precision that enables the reader to follow the clashes between British and German troops, as the latter pushed westward toward the city. These two chapters are filled with battle maps, photographs, and heroic stories of individual soldiers who made valiant contributions to both the defensive and offensive efforts. The concluding chapters discuss the fall of Heraklion to German forces, the resulting evacuation of Allied troops, and the initial aftermath of the battle.

Overall, Prekatsounakis provides an impressive work that is saturated with so many specifics that a nine-day battle is detailed in just under three hundred pages. While the analysis is commendable, there is a lack of contextualization that situates this monograph in the broader historiography. Therefore, this study is positioned for readers who have a specific interest in the logistics of the battle or a desire for more general knowledge about the topic. Setting that critique aside, given the variegated and remarkable array of primary sources, this study will prove to be a beneficial tool for historians who wish to engage in research about the topic.

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