



This book has been a labour of love because I really believe that this story needed to be told.... So Australians don't forget the Greek - Australian connection forged during World War II



Bob Carr gives Diggers and Greeks a big salute!

On the Tuesday 6 April 2010, the anniversary of the German invasion of Greece, a date few people remember, Bob Carr, former Premier of NSW, launched Maria Hill's new book *Diggers and Greeks* on the Australian Campaigns in Greece and Crete at the Anzac Memorial at Park in Sydney. As twilight was descending upon the city and evening lights were slowly being turned on, the massive bombing of Piraeus harbour that took place on 6 April 1941 was long forgotten.

Awesome in its beauty, the memorial houses a breathtaking sculpture of a soldier held aloft on his shield, reminiscent of the Spartan expression: 'come back with your shield or lying on it' or «Επανεθλει με ασπίδα σας, ή σε αυτό», making it a most appro-

priate place to launch a book about Australian soldiers and their Greek allies.

The book launch attracted a large crowd of people who were so passionate about the subject that they enthused those around them. A Western Australian man - whose father fought in Crete, was so moved after listening to Maria Hill speak about the campaigns on the radio that he decided to fly with his wife to Sydney for the launch just to meet the author in person.

Also in attendance was Vasilios Tolios, the Greek Consul General of Sydney, Phillip Black, Deputy Mayor of the City of Sydney Council and Darren Mitchell the Assistant Director of Veterans' Affairs and Grants Administration Unit



Dr Maria Hill signing a copy for the Superintendent Peter Stathis AFSM - NSW Fire Brigade. To her left is Mr Victor Kepreotis president of the Kytherian Association of Australia [major sponsor of the book]



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and Mr Harry Danalis, President of the Greek Orthodox Community of NSW who hosted the launch. Maria Hill's special guest however was Oswald 'Ozzie' James Pierce of the 2/1st Field Regiment, a 92-year-old veteran of the Greek campaign who spoke about his quest to get a medal for his mates who fought in Greece and on Crete, from the Australia government.

The launch attracted many high calibre

speakers including Vrasidas Karalis the professor of Modern Greek from Sydney University, who was very engaging in his role of Master of Ceremonies. What added to the entertainment was the fabulous performance of The Belles, Australia's Andrew Sisters, dressed in military uniforms, whose singing recreated for those present, the era of the 1940s. Great 'kefi' was had by all with the performance by the Cretan Association of Sydney and New South Wales Dance Group, who illustrated through dance, why you do not

take on the Cretans in war.

There was standing room only, as close to two hundred people gathered to hear why this book made such an impact on Bob Carr. It is clearly no ordinary book about war nor has it been written by an Arm-Chair General keen on studying military strategy but by a Greek-Australian female military historian who has spent the last eight years of her life studying the Greek and Crete campaigns in Athens and Canberra, from a human relations point of view.

'Reading Diggers and Greeks,' says Bob Carr, 'I am reminded of the remarkable rapport between the Australian army and Greek citizens in World War II: Young Australian soldiers battling to protect Greek independence against the odds, ultimately failing but achieving an unprecedented friendship between a native people and an overseas army. Maria Hill tells a compelling story of the relationship that emerged between Australians and Greeks, for the first time in the detail it deserve and with a scholar's command of the material, while not neglecting the



Mr Zaharias Lironis President of the Cretan Association of Sydney and NSW - one of the sponsors of the book



Prof Vrasidas Karalis presents Dr Maria Hill a bouquet on behalf of the Greek Festival of Sydney



Dr Maria Hill presenting Prof. Vrasidas Karalis who was MC for the evening with a copy of her book. Standing behind her is her son Douglas Hill who created the website diggersandgreeks.com.au