The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. FOSSELLA. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

HONORING THE 61st ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF CRETE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the 61st anniversary of the Battle of Crete. This is a historic event with direct significance to the allies' victory of World War II.

On May 20, 1941, thousands of German paratroopers and gliders began landing on the island of Crete. Both the allies and Nazis wanted Crete because of its strategic location. At the time the British controlled the island. It was a very strong point on the lifeline to India and protected both Palestine and Egypt. The Nazi invasion force included the elite German paratroopers and glider troops. Hitler felt that this would be an easy victory. Yet he is quoted to have said shortly after the invasion, ''France fell in 8 days. Why is Crete free?''

The invasion of Crete lasted 11 days. It resulted in more than 6,000 German troopers listed as killed, wounded or missing in action. The losses to the elite 7th parachute division were felt so hard by the German military, it signified the end of large scale airborne operations. They did not have another parachute division invasion in the rest of the war. This valiant fight by the Cretan people began in the first hour of the Nazi airborne invasion, in contrast to the European underground movements that took a year or more after being invaded to activate. Young boys, old men and women displayed breathtaking bravery in defending their Crete. German soldiers never got used to Cretan women fighting against them. They would tear the dress from the shoulder of suspected women to find bruises from the recoil of the rifle. The penalty was death.

The London Times of July 28, 1941 reported, and I quote, that ''500 Cretan women have been deported to Germany for taking part in the defense of their native island.''

Another surprise for the German soldiers who invaded Crete was the heroic resistance of the clergy. A priest leading his parishioners into battle was not what the Germans anticipated. At Paleochora, Father Stylianos Frantzeskis, hearing of the German airborne invasion, rushed to his church, sounded the bell, took his rifle and marched his volunteers toward Maleme to write history. This struggle became an example for all Europe to follow in defying German occupation and aggression.

The price paid by the Cretans for their valiant resistance to Nazi forces was extremely high. Thousands of civilians died from random executions, starvation and imprisonment.

□ 2100

Entire communities were burned and destroyed by the Germans as punishment for the Cretan resistance movement. Yet this resistance lasted for 4 years.

The Battle of Crete was to change the final outcome of World War II. The Battle of Crete significantly contributed in delaying Hitler's plan to invade Russia. The invasion was delayed from April to June of 1941. The 2-month delay in the invasion made Hitler's forces face the harsh Russian winter. The Russian snow storms and the subzero temperatures eventually stalled the Nazi invasion before they could take Moscow or Leningrad. This was the beginning of the downfall of the Nazi reign of terror.

This significant battle and the heroic drive of the Cretan people must always be remembered and honored. Democracy came from Greece, and the Cretan heroes exemplify the courage that it takes to preserve it.

Today, the courage of the Cretan people is seen in the Members of the Pancretan Association of America and the Cretan Association ''Omonoia'' that is located in Astoria-Queens, which I have the honor of representing.

The Pancretan Association officers are Theodore Panagiotakis, president; Michael Papoutsakis, vice president; John Stavroulakis, secretary; and Emmanuel Kavrakis, treasurer. They are assisted by outstanding board members George Bassias, George Bombolakis, Nikos Chartzoulakis, George Fradelakis, George Kokonas, George Malandrakis, and Vassilis Manrangoudakis.

The Cretan people fought a seen enemy. Today we need the courage they displayed to fight the unseen enemy that struck on 9–11 and that continues to threaten our freedom and democracy.

I request my colleagues to join me in honoring the Cretans in the United States, Greece and the Diaspora.

THE SIXTY-FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE HEROIC BATTLE OF CRETE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FLAKE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I too rise proudly to celebrate the 61st anniversary of the Battle of Crete, a World War II event that had a profound impact on the ultimate result of the war.

Amidst the cataclysm that had engulfed the countries of Europe at the time, it seems now preposterous that a small island dared to stand up to such a powerful enemy. For the benefit of future generations, I will share a brief account of these events as they unfolded.

In early April 1941, Greece was invaded by the German Army rushing to the aid of their defeated and humiliated ally, Italy. Following a valiant struggle against overwhelmingly superior German forces in and among the mountains to the north, Greek forces had been pushed entirely off the continent and were forced to take refuge on the Island of Crete.

The German Army then looked across the sea to Crete because of the British airfields on the island, which could be used by the allies for air strikes against the oil fields of Romania, thereby denying this vital war commodity to Hitler's forces. If captured, it would also provide air and sea bases from which the Nazis could dominate the eastern Mediterranean and launch air attacks against Allied forces in northern Africa. In fact, the Nazi high command envisioned the capture of Crete to be the first of a series of assaults leading to the Suez Canal.

Finally, as a result of the battle, Hitler's master plan to invade Russia before the coming of winter had to be postponed, thus directly resulting in the deaths of many of their troops as a consequence of not being properly prepared to survive the harsh Russian winter.

On May 20, 1941, Crete became the theater of the largest German airborne operation of the war, code named Operation Mercury. On that day, more than 8,000 paratroopers were dropped on the island. They were met with ferocious resistance by the Allied troops waiting for them and by the Cretan population.

Cretans fought bravely with whatever was at hand during the invasion. Even though the Allied forces had decided not to arm them, old men, women and children used whatever makeshift weapons they could find. They pointed their rusty guns at the descending German paratroopers. They used sticks, sickles and even their bare hands to fight those soldiers already on the ground. Most of them were illiterate villagers, but their intuition led them to fight with courage and bravery. ''Aim for the legs and you will get them in the heart'' was the popular motto that summarized their hastily acquired battle experience.

Although a tactical victory for the Germans, the Battle of Crete proved to be rather costly to them in terms of casualties and loss of aircraft. Of the 8,100 paratroopers involved in this operation, close to 4,000 were killed and