

**Memories of the Great Depression in Greece during WWII:
An Interview with Chris Fotopoulos
(interviewed by Greg Tam)**

The Great Depression was in the 1920s to mid 1930s. During this time, many Europeans suffered from basic living necessities such as food, clothing, job, water, and the likes. Adolph Hitler was Chancellor of German and was preparing his country for a war. The Europeans weren't expecting that, but when they found out, it was too late. Hitler was already prepared to attack its neighboring countries. This is what led the world to World War II.

The speed of Hitler's army was what conquered these countries. Some countries didn't want to be a part of a world war, so they stayed neutral. Germany forced the Italians to be partners with Hitler in WWII. In August of 1940, the president of Italy declared war with Greece because they did not surrender to them as they had wished. Greece was pushing the Italians back to their own country. When Hitler saw this, he sent his tanks and the air force to battle them. Greece did not have the air force or the navy to help in the fight but only machine guns and automatic weapons. These were not enough to stop the tanks and the airplanes of Hitler from bombing Greece. This forced the Greeks to surrender to the Italians and Hitler's army. Then Greece went through a period of starvation for some time because the Germans had destroyed their country. Germans had taken real estate, livestock, food and other things from the Greeks. People were dying on the streets of town and cities because of the crude things Germans did to them.

When the Germans had defeated all the countries, they held a meeting to decide where each European country would be divided. They had decided that Greece would belong to the west and the bordering countries around Greece belonged to the Russian. Some of the Greeks were tempted to go back to the east, so a Civil War began and lasted for four years. With the war between Germany and Greece, which lasted four years, the Greeks had to suffer through eight years of misery.

A Story from Chris Fotopoulos

Chris was only a small boy when World War II began. When German soldiers were needed elsewhere to fight, Italian soldiers were forced to take up the post to keep the Greeks under control. The Italians were hesitant because they did not want a war between Italy and Greece.

The Italians were much more friendlier and good-hearted people. When Chris and his friend was walking down the street one day, he saw some Italians cooking on the other side of the street. They had to eat their food in a canteen, which was on the opposite side of the street. Standing on the canteen side of the street as

a small boy, hungry and miserable, they stared into the canteen and watched the Italians ate. The Italians were feeling bad about it, so the next time they cooked, they left some food in the pots for them to eat in exchange for a favor. They had to wash the pots in a nearby creek. They and these Italians soon became friends. Chris was watching a soccer game while walking down that same street another day. He was not watching where he was walking when he ran into a German soldier who carrying a bowl of soup and his meal. The German spilt the soup all over himself. He got so made that he gave Chris a great big kick and he was thrown three meters away.

Now during the war, he couldn't tell his mother what had happened. She was having a very hard time because Chris father was trapped in Athens during a business trip. He was trapped because Germans had bombed the railroad, streets, and other transportation out of the country. So Chris' mother raised eight boys by herself. At one point, things got really bad for his mother. She had to tear off part of her own dress to make a smaller dress for Chris. Dresses were all that she knew how to sew. For food, she had to take her extra olive oil and walked eight miles to a nearby village and traded it for vegetables. She thought it would be healthier than meat. She would walk eight miles back home with these vegetables in her hand. What a tough time it was for Chris' family.