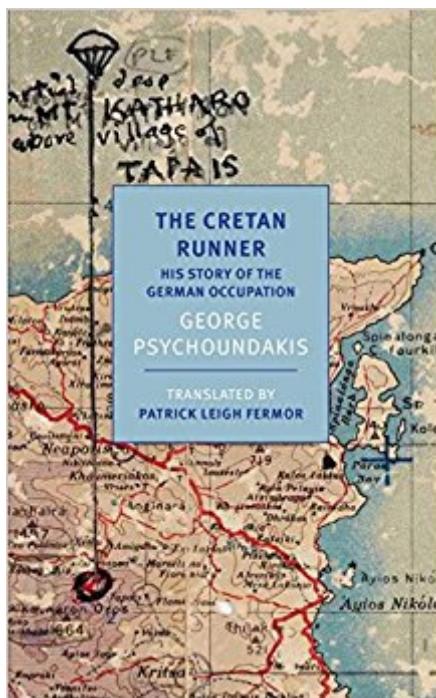


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# The Cretan Runner: His Story Of The German Occupation



## Synopsis

George Psychoundakis was a twenty-one-year-old shepherd from the village of Asi Gonia when the battle of Crete began: "It was in May 1941 that, all of a sudden, high in the sky, we heard the drone of many aeroplanes growing steadily closer." The German parachutists soon outnumbered the British troops who were forced first to retreat, then to evacuate, before Crete fell to the Germans. So began the Cretan Resistance and the young shepherd's career as a wartime runner. In this unique account of the Resistance, Psychoundakis records the daily life of his fellow Cretans, his treacherous journeys on foot from the eastern White Mountains to the western slopes of Mount Ida to transmit messages and transport goods, and his enduring friendships with British officers (like his eventual translator Patrick Leigh Fermor) whose missions he helped to carry out with unflagging courage, energy, and good humor. Includes thirty-two black-and-white photographs and a map.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Psychoundakis was able to master challenges that would stagger an Olympic athlete: he could scramble snowy cliffs with a sixty-pound pack on his back, run fifty-plus miles through the night on a starvation diet of boiled hay, and outfox a Gestapo death squad that had him cornered." Christopher McDougall "Psychoundakis's effortlessly poetic account reflected a passionate love of his homeland and its people, a geologist's and botanist's eye, chortling bemusement at the habits of the upper-class British agents, and deep comradeship with his fellow resistance fighters." Simon Steyne, *The*

Guardian → “There have been other memoirs of wartime Crete but those were visitors’ books. George’s story, as Leigh Fermor points out in the introduction, is unique.” • Allison Pearson “Any fresh volume on the subject would need to be exceptional. The Cretan Runner not only competes but transcends; it is not exceptional, it is unique.” • The Times Literary Supplement “The book has at once a calm of a race which takes it for granted that life is full of death, and the excitement of a fighter who wildly enjoys his own part of the dangerous business. It is full of jokes and full of pride.” • Sunday Times “But now Psychooundakis’s style seems the fresher, a scrappy, honest account of a temporary alliance with, and allegiance to, an external force in order to rid Crete of its occupiers. And with all the frustrations, disagreements, misunderstandings and damaged pride, as well as boozy parties and heroism, that entailed.” • Vera Rules

George Psychooundakis (1920–2006) was born and raised in the remote Cretan village of Asi Gonia, where he received a rudimentary education. When the German army invaded in 1941, he left his work as a shepherd and joined the Resistance. He would eventually run messages for the British Special Operations Executive, and was noted for his speed and intimacy with the landscape. After the war he was mistakenly imprisoned as a deserter and began writing what would become *The Cretan Runner* (published in English in 1955 and in Greek in 1986) while in prison. In addition to his memoir, Psychoundakis wrote *The Eagle’s Nest*, a study of the customs of Cretan mountain dwellers, and translated works by Hesiod and Homer into the Cretan language. In 1945 Psychoundakis received the Medal of the Order of the British Empire for Meritorious Service, and in 1981 he was recognized by the Academy of Athens for his translations. He lived on Crete, with his wife and three children, until the end of his life. Patrick Leigh Fermor (1915–2011) chronicled his youthful walk across Europe to Constantinople in a trilogy comprising *A Time of Gifts*, *Between the Woods and the Water*, and *The Broken Road*. After serving on Crete during World War II, Leigh Fermor settled in Greece and his books *Mani* and *Roumeli* attest to his deep love for the country. In 2004 he was knighted for his services to literature and to British–Greek relations.

Well done! Wish there could have been a few maps of Crete showing the various cities quoted. Great piece of history showing the bravery and resourcefulness of the Cretans and Allied forces to disrupt German operations.

Splendid account of the Occupation and the Resistance. Adventure of the highest well and simply told.

An excellent book. I thoroughly enjoyed it and learned so much about the Cretan Resistance.

Been borne at the Island of Crete at the end of the WW2, reading these books is like leaving it. Amazing !!!!.

Great perspective, loved it

Great also if you are interested in the history of Crete during WWII

Fascinating story of a Cretan and his account of the barbaric German occupation of Crete during WWII and his role as a guide and runner in the mountains of Crete. Translated by Patrick Leigh Fermor, who also wrote an interesting introduction to the book. Highly recommended.

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