

WILLIAM STANLEY MOSS

I first met Billy Moss in late 1943 when he was 22. He was brought along in the esoteric but effective methods of B.5, the Cretan section for which I was responsible, by Paddy Leigh-Fermor. Paddy had just whipped an Italian General, Angelo Carta of the 51st Siena Division, out of Crete with his consent and reckoned that he could probably do the same for a German general without such consent. For such an operation, whose effect on morale, whatever side you were on, would be creative of the deepest impressions, the leader must pick his own men. And Paddy had no reason to regret his choice of Billy Moss.

He was an exceptionally handsome man of great height and drawing speech, with a strong sense of romanticism which will have been stimulated by his Galitzine ancestry: his world, for which he was a little too late, was that of Evelyn Waugh's youth, as was made clear to any who visited his Gezira home. His role in the impending operation was to halt the official general and to drive the new "general" away.

They had great difficulty in reaching their destination. Paddy succeeded in parachuting but Billy had to go by sea. Once they had met up with Kostas Paterakis, George Tyrakis and their other henchmen, everything went according to plan. The general was to have been Müller, a brutish creature who was later executed as a war criminal for good reason; but he had gone to the Dodecanese, so it was to be his successor, Kreipe, G.O.C. of the 22nd (Sebastopol) Division.

How they stopped his car short of Knossos, and how Billy drove Paddy in Kreipe's hat (with Kreipe under the seat in the back) through Herakleion, a garrison town with some thirty checkpoints, is known to all who read Billy's book "Ill Met By Moonlight" (a typical title) and to the even wider audience who saw the film of that name with Dirk Bogarde. Kreipe himself, a decent man with a wry sense of humour, called it a *Husarenepisode*, and his one somewhat Teutonic regret was that neither Billy nor Paddy should have been regular officers.

Anything after such a spectacular adventure could only be anti-climax. It took three weeks to get Kreipe out of Crete and Billy then raised a rudimentary Russian legion from deserters of the German 999 Labour Corps. His Russian was, understandably, better than his Greek. His private army had its exploits but can never have commended itself to Marshal Stalin, with its vague links with Tsarism, nor did it become all that desirable when relations with E.A.M. further deteriorated. Afterwards Billy saw service on other fronts and I saw him no more, though one heard of his post-war quest for Otto Skorzeny, with whom he had so much in common. We were a lucky section in B.5. During the war we lost only Kiwi Perkins and Bill Knox of our English personnel, though our Greek losses were grievous. Not long after the war we lost Skipper Pool and Tom Dunbabin. Now it has been Billy's turn, and he was almost the youngest of us. But he will not be forgotten. The kidnapping of a general in the middle of his own command remains a unique operation.

JACK SMITH-HUGHES