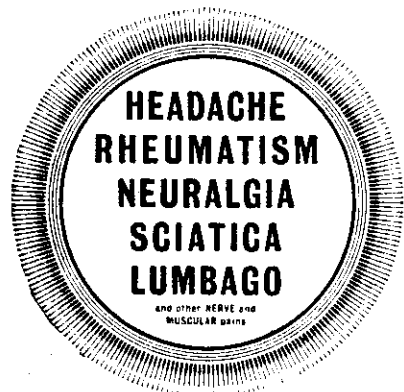


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BACK TO GREECE WITH CORSO

Kiwi With A Debt To Repay

MOST of the strange things which happened to New Zealanders in Greece and Crete five years ago are half-remembered tales by now, a little fuzzy round the edges from age, clearly etched in the memory of only one man. There have been other strange adventures in other places—Alamein, Tripoli, Tunisia, Cassino.

But just before Christmas came an echo of those days; call it, if you will, the sequel to a Greek epic. In the space of a few days one New Zealander arrived back from overseas with a Greek wife, and another set out to visit Greece a second time, this time as a member of the CORSO relief teams. There was a strange bond between these three.

Ted Nathan was the soldier returning home; Katina Torakis was his Greek wife; Jim McDevitt was the volunteer relief worker returning to Europe. Those the personae; the drama, however old the story, is an exciting one—or it would have been in the days before the incredible became commonplace. It must be McDevitt's story.

With Upham and Denvir

He left New Zealand with the First Echelon, and went to Greece with the 20th Battalion, as it was then. Charles Upham, V.C. and Bar, and Jack Denvir, who became a brigadier in Tito's forces, were comrades. He came through Greece unscathed, but on Crete on May 23 (that May of 1941) he was wounded. Then he was captured, and taken to a camp near Galatos. From Galatos, one dark night

before the moon was up, he escaped, slipping through barbed wire into the darkness, running whatever risk there was from the guards' wild shooting. By chance he met other Kiwis, also at large. They hid in a mountain village, were sheltered and fed by Cretans, but shortly afterwards McDevitt left for Sclavapoula, a village near the coast, where news would come quicker of any chance to escape by boat.

His protectress here was a Greek woman of courage and character. "If ever a New Zealander owed his life to a Greek, I did," he says. There were frequent alarms, and precipitate escapes to deeper hiding when German patrols appeared in the village. In the Torakis household next door was hiding Ted Nathan, a young Ngapuhi who had fought with the Maori Battalion, and had been badly wounded. During the long months the two Kiwis lay in hiding next door to each other a friendship grew up between them, and with Katina Torakis, who taught them Greek. Katina was the village schoolmistress; and her Greek was free of the impurities of the local dialect. At the time it seemed as good an occupation as any. Neither thought that one of them would marry his teacher and take her to New Zealand, or that the other would return to Greece to put his knowledge of the language to practical, humanitarian use. Or, indeed, that the three would ever meet again.

One day it was close—too close. Only the complete presence of mind of a

Greek woman saved McDevitt from recapture. News had come of a boat which might be ready to take him off in a few days. It was May of '42, and he had been hiding a whole year. The thought of escape was sweet. He worked quickly, gathering as much food as he could, preparing kerosene-tin containers for water. Two Germans, dressed in shirts and shorts and deceptively like Cretan village lads in appearance, knocked at the door. But they were armed, and the donkeys they led were loaded down with machine-guns and ammunition. Hunting escaped prisoners was good Teutonic sport, and a traitor had sent word that British were hiding in Sclavapoula.

McDevitt hid the food and kerosene tins in an outhouse and himself in an upper room from which he could hear everything happening below. The Germans were not hungry, but his protectress assumed a busy, housewifely hospitality and persuaded them to postpone their search until they had eaten. She produced glasses of the strong liquor the soldiers knew as Ozo, and cigarettes and raisins. When they were seated, and busy with their drinks, she left on the pretence of preparing more food, and whispered through the door of the upstairs room, "Now is your chance, Engleesi." He took it.

The Road Back

Nathan, who had left the village some hours previously on an errand to another ex-prisoner, escaped too, though later he was captured and, after a narrow escape from being shot as a spy, finished up in a Stalag in Ober-Silesia. McDevitt remained on Crete almost a year longer before he contacted the submarine-chaser which finally took him to Alexandria.

Now he is going back. In common with his comrades in the CORSO teams, he feels the call to do something, urgently, to help the people of a country which has suffered more than any in this war. With him, the desire to help is more personal, perhaps. He would like to go back to Crete to say thank-you to the brave woman who gossiped carelessly with German soldiers to cover a hunted man's escape. If he can't go back, he will nevertheless feel that his work is at least some repayment of the debt many Kiwis owe to many Greeks.

Donations towards the support of the teams CORSO has sent to Greece may be forwarded to "Greek Relief," Wellington, C.I.

Return to London

RECENTLY in London's Royal Albert Hall Bronislaw Huberman, Polish-born violinist, thrilled his first London audience since 1939 when, with the London Symphony Orchestra, under Dr. Malcolm Sargent, the Tchaikovsky Concerto in D was played. An active opponent of Nazi tyranny since 1933, Huberman (with a group of well-known European artists, all protesting against Germany's boycott of Jewish artists) refused overtures from the German State conductor, Dr. Wilhelm Furtwaengler, to appear in concerts with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra.



MEMBERS of CORSO's teams and some of the personal luggage and supplies which accompanied them on the Mooltan