

*(summary)*

CHRIS WHITE

Patrick Leigh Fermor in Crete: Myths, Realities and Surprises

*In war, truth is the first casualty*

This paper is concerned with Patrick Leigh Fermor's work as an agent of the Special Operations Executive in war-time Crete. It sets out to explore him as an individual, as well as the social and historical process of war. Paradoxes emerge. Leigh Fermor seems to have actively promoted a mythologisation of himself, while at the same time being either reticent about or unaware of the many positive ways that others saw him. This is shown by his understanding of historical reality as well as in his personal presentation. His time in Crete had more than its fair share of incidents and controversies, successes and tragedies. I am keen to discuss the more problematic of these in detail, bringing new archival research to light now that Leigh Fermor's archive and private papers are available to the public.

Archival and textual research contained in the paper includes Leigh Fermor's SOE Personal File, accounts of the genesis of the Kreipe kidnap plan that contrast with archival historical reality, descriptions of his personal flair and confidence from contemporary diaries, as well as unpublished memoirs from resistance colleagues and corroboration from diary entries of incidents subsequently described in his published work. Personal tragedy (the death of Ianni Tsangarakis) along with great social tragedy (the Amari massacres) are contextualized by previously unpublished documents from Leigh Fermor's archive and the National Archives, as well as a vivid insight from a war-time brother-in-arms.