

ALAN HLAD

THE
BOOK
SPY

AN AMERICAN LIBRARIAN.
A PORTUGUESE BOOKSELLER.
A MISSION TO TURN THE
TIDE OF WWII.



ALAN HLAD

THE
BOOK
SPY

AN AMERICAN LIBRARIAN.
A PORTUGUESE BOOKSELLER.
A MISSION TO TURN THE
TIDE OF WWII.

Praise for the novels of Alan Hlad

CHURCHILL'S SECRET MESSENGER

“Hlad does a nice job of intertwining the romance and action stories, treating both realistically and largely without melodrama. The early parts of the novel, detailing Rose’s work in the belowground War Rooms and her encounters with Churchill, prove every bit as compelling as the behind-the-lines drama. Good reading for both WWII and romance fans.”

—*Booklist*

THE LONG FLIGHT HOME

“Hlad’s debut snares readers with its fresh angle on the blitz of WWII, focusing on the homing pigeons used by the British, and the people who trained and cared for them.... Descriptions of the horrors of war and the excitement of battle are engaging, and the unusual element of the carrier pigeons lends an intriguing twist. This story will speak not only to romance readers and WWII buffs but also to animal advocates and anyone who enjoys discovering quirky details that are hidden in history.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“I’ve always been fascinated by homing pigeons, and Alan Hlad makes these amazing birds and their trainers shine in *The Long Flight Home*—a sweeping tale full of romance and espionage, poignant sacrifice and missed chances, uncommon courage and the ongoing costs of war. A compelling debut told with conviction and great heart.”

—Paula McLain, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Paris Wife* and *Love and Ruin*

“Hlad’s debut delves into an obscure piece of World War II history: the covert mission of the National Pigeon Service, which deployed an army of homing pigeons to send messages to Britain from Nazi-occupied France.... Ollie’s attempts to escape from France are gripping, and Hlad adeptly drives home the devastating civilian cost of the war.”

—*Booklist*

“Alan Hlad tells a dramatic, fictionalized story about the real use of pigeons during World War II. . . . Compelling.... The engaging plot and fascinating details of the National Pigeon Service make it a rewarding read. Many civilian pigeon-keepers volunteered to try to turn the tide of the war, not knowing if it would work or be worth the loss of their birds in the dangerous process. *The Long Flight Home* captures the contributions of the average citizens who, in a time of peril, rose to meet the challenge in heroic ways.”

—BookPage

Books by Alan Hlad

THE LONG FLIGHT HOME

CHURCHILL'S SECRET MESSENGER

A LIGHT BEYOND THE TRENCHES

THE BOOK SPY

Published by Kensington Publishing Corp.

THE BOOK SPY

ALAN HLAD



JOHN SCOGNAMIGLIO BOOKS
Kensington Publishing Corp.
www.kensingtonbooks.com



All copyrighted material within is Attributor Protected.

Table of Contents

[Praise](#)

[Also by](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright Page](#)

[Dedication](#)

[PROLOGUE - WASHINGTON, DC—DECEMBER 22, 1941](#)

[PART 1 - ENLISTMENT](#)

[CHAPTER 1 - NEW YORK CITY, UNITED STATES—MAY 19, 1942](#)

[CHAPTER 2 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—MAY 22, 1942](#)

[CHAPTER 3 - NEW YORK CITY, UNITED STATES—JUNE 23, 1942](#)

[CHAPTER 4 - NEW YORK CITY, UNITED STATES—JULY 2, 1942](#)

[CHAPTER 5 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—JULY 3, 1942](#)

[CHAPTER 6 - PORTO, PORTUGAL—JULY 4, 1942](#)

[CHAPTER 7 - WASHINGTON, DC—AUGUST 9, 1942](#)

[CHAPTER 8 - WASHINGTON, DC—AUGUST 10, 1942](#)

[PART 2 - MISSION](#)

[CHAPTER 9 - NEW YORK CITY, NY—FEBRUARY 21, 1943](#)

CHAPTER 10 - HORTA, AZORES—FEBRUARY 22, 1943

CHAPTER 11 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—FEBRUARY 22, 1943

CHAPTER 12 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—FEBRUARY 23, 1943

CHAPTER 13 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—FEBRUARY 23, 1943

CHAPTER 14 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—MARCH 2, 1943

CHAPTER 15 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—MARCH 10, 1943

CHAPTER 16 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—MARCH 17, 1943

CHAPTER 17 - ESTORIL, PORTUGAL—MAY 10, 1943

CHAPTER 18 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—MAY 11, 1943

CHAPTER 19 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—MAY 11, 1943

CHAPTER 20 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—MAY 12, 1943

CHAPTER 21 - ESTORIL, PORTUGAL—MAY 18, 1943

CHAPTER 22 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—JUNE 2, 1943

CHAPTER 23 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—JUNE 4, 1943

CHAPTER 24 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—JUNE 4, 1943

CHAPTER 25 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—JUNE 4, 1943

CHAPTER 26 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—JUNE 5, 1943

CHAPTER 27 - ESTORIL, PORTUGAL—JULY 1, 1943

CHAPTER 28 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—JULY 15, 1943

PART 3 - OPERATION FORTITUDE

[CHAPTER 29 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—DECEMBER 10, 1943](#)

[CHAPTER 30 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—JANUARY 7, 1944](#)

[CHAPTER 31 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—JANUARY 10, 1944](#)

[CHAPTER 32 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—JANUARY 10, 1944](#)

[CHAPTER 33 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—JANUARY 11, 1944](#)

[CHAPTER 34 - ESTORIL, PORTUGAL—FEBRUARY 20, 1944](#)

[CHAPTER 35 - PENICHE, PORTUGAL—MARCH 12, 1944](#)

[CHAPTER 36 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—JUNE 2, 1944](#)

[CHAPTER 37 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—JUNE 3, 1944](#)

[CHAPTER 38 - PENICHE, PORTUGAL—JUNE 3, 1944](#)

[CHAPTER 39 - SALZBURG, AUSTRIA—JUNE 3, 1944](#)

[CHAPTER 40 - OBERSALZBERG, GERMANY—JUNE 3, 1944](#)

[CHAPTER 41 - PENICHE, PORTUGAL—JUNE 3, 1944](#)

[CHAPTER 42 - SALZBURG, AUSTRIA—JUNE 4, 1944](#)

[CHAPTER 43 - D-DAY—LISBON, PORTUGAL—JUNE 6, 1944](#)

[CHAPTER 44 - D-DAY—PENICHE, PORTUGAL—JUNE 6, 1944](#)

[CHAPTER 45 - ESTORIL, PORTUGAL—JUNE 8, 1944](#)

[CHAPTER 46 - COVILHÃ, PORTUGAL—JUNE 8, 1944](#)

[PART 4 - LIBERATION](#)

[CHAPTER 47 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—AUGUST, 25, 1944](#)

[CHAPTER 48 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—AUGUST 25, 1944](#)

[CHAPTER 49 - PENICHE, PORTUGAL—AUGUST 25, 1944](#)

[CHAPTER 50 - CASCAIS, PORTUGAL—SEPTEMBER 5, 1944](#)

[CHAPTER 51 - LISBON, PORTUGAL—SEPTEMBER 7, 1944](#)

[AUTHOR'S NOTE](#)

[Discussion Questions](#)

JOHN SCOGNAMIGLIO BOOKS are published by

Kensington Publishing Corp.
119 West 40th Street
New York, NY 10018

Copyright © 2023 by Alan Hlad

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, organizations, places, events, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

To the extent that the image or images on the cover of this book depict a person or persons, such person or persons are merely models, and are not intended to portray any character or characters featured in the book.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means without the prior written consent of the Publisher, excepting brief quotes used in reviews.

The JS and John Scognamiglio Books logo is a trademark of Kensington Publishing Corp.

ISBN-13: 978-1-4967-3855-4 (ebook)

ISBN: 978-1-4967-3854-7

For the librarians who went to war

PROLOGUE

WASHINGTON, DC—DECEMBER 22, 1941

Two weeks after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Colonel William “Wild Bill” Donovan—head of the Office of Coordinator of Information (COI), America’s newly created centralized intelligence agency—entered the West Wing of the White House. The lobby was decorated with holiday wreaths and a lush, unlit Christmas tree, filling the air with a sweet scent of pine. Top American and British military leaders, as well as Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, were soon to convene in Washington for the Arcadia Conference to develop military strategy for the war. But Donovan—a stalky, silver-haired World War I Medal of Honor recipient and prominent Wall Street lawyer who’d been placed on active duty—was not invited to the conference.

A deep determination burned within him. He squeezed the handle of his locked leather briefcase, which contained top-secret documents. Although he reported directly to FDR and had gained his trust and friendship, he wasn’t a member of the president’s inner circle. Regardless, he was committed to influencing US military strategy and obtaining support for his clandestine operations.

Grace Tully, a middle-aged secretary wearing a navy dress with a diamanté flower brooch, approached him. “Good day, Colonel Donovan.”

“How are you, Grace?” Donovan asked.

“Well, thank you.” She took his coat and hung it on a rack.

“And how is Missy?”

“Same,” Grace said, a timbre of melancholy in her voice. “She’s getting physical therapy in Warm Springs.”

“I’m sure she’s receiving the best of care,” Donovan said, attempting to raise Grace’s spirit. “If you speak with her, please give her my best wishes for a swift recovery.”

“I will, sir.”

Six months prior, Marguerite “Missy” LeHand, FDR’s personal secretary, suffered a stroke that left her partially paralyzed with limited ability to speak.

Donovan was shocked and saddened by the news. He'd grown fond of Miss LeHand, who—like him—was a New Yorker from Irish decent. Although Grace was cordial and competent, he revered Missy's gumption and gatekeeping skills, and he hoped that she'd somehow regain her health and return to her duties.

Grace accompanied Donovan to the Oval Office and knocked on the door.

"Come in," President Roosevelt's voice said.

"Have a good meeting, Colonel," she said.

"Thank you," he said.

Grace turned and left.

Donovan entered the room and closed the door behind him. "Hello, Mr. President."

"Good morning, Bill." Roosevelt wore a gray pinstripe suit and black tie, and was seated behind a veneer maple desk—cluttered with books, papers, pens, a telephone, and over a dozen figurines.

Donovan approached Roosevelt, who remained in his chair, and shook his hand.

"I suppose you purposely timed our meeting to influence the outcome of the Arcadia Conference," Roosevelt said.

"Indeed, sir," Donovan said.

"I appreciate your candor and counsel." Roosevelt gestured to an upholstered chair beside his desk.

Donovan sat, placing his briefcase on his lap. His eyes gravitated to two figurines on the president's desk—a Democratic donkey and Republican elephant, linked together with a metal chain. "New statuettes?"

Roosevelt nodded. "I thought the shackles might get them to work together."

He smiled.

Donovan admired the president's sense of humor in the most trying of times, as well as his willingness to collaborate with people who held opposing views. Although Donovan and Roosevelt had similar personalities, they had conflicting political views. A decade earlier, Donovan publicly criticized Roosevelt's record as governor of New York. Roosevelt never held a grudge and, when the war erupted in Europe, he'd enlisted Donovan to travel to England as an informal emissary to meet Churchill and the directors of British intelligence. FDR soon relied upon Donovan's insight and, five months earlier, had signed an order naming Donovan Coordinator of

Information.

“What’s on your mind, Bill?” Roosevelt asked.

“Now that we’re at war, we need to establish a method for clandestine military measures against the enemy.” Donovan unlocked his briefcase, removed a one-page memorandum, and gave it to the president. “My recommendations are brief.”

The president read the memorandum. He rubbed his eyes and placed the paper facedown on his desk. Roosevelt—who downplayed the effects of his polio, except with his most trusted advisors and friends—labored to adjust the steel leg braces under his trousers and swiveled his chair toward Donovan. “Guerilla corps?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Independent from the army and navy?”

“The coordination of spies and intelligence should be centralized.” An image of his visit with Winston Churchill and his intelligence directors flashed in Donovan’s head. “I recommend that our guerilla forces be similar to the British model.”

“Special Operations Executive.”

“Yes, sir.”

Roosevelt paused, leaning back in his chair. “I’m sure you’re aware that my appointment of you to head the COI has been received with animosity by the army and navy. Even J. Edgar Hoover views you as a threat to FBI authority.”

Donovan nodded.

“Each branch previously led their own independent intelligence operations. You’ve taken their turf, and they’re not happy about it. And now you want to create a combatant spy force that will steal away some of their best candidates.”

“That’s correct,” Donovan said.

Roosevelt crossed his arms. “I agree with your proposal, but I have other urgent issues. Our armed forces are in no shape to fight. We’re lucky to have two huge oceans separating us from our adversaries. It’ll take time to ramp up our military personnel, arms production, and training.”

Donovan straightened his back. “With all due respect, Mr. President, *time* is something neither we nor our allies have.”

Roosevelt drew a deep breath. “All right, Bill. I’ll include your recommendations in my discussions at the conference, but I cannot make

promises.”

“Thank you, sir.”

A knock came from the door. Grace peeked her head inside and said, “Pardon me, Mr. President. Prime Minister Churchill has arrived early. He’s on his way and will be here in thirty minutes.”

“Thank you, Grace,” Roosevelt said.

Grace slipped away and closed the door.

“I’m sorry you will not be joining us for the conference,” Roosevelt said. “Churchill and I agreed to limit the attendance to heads of military. No intelligence chiefs will be at the meeting.”

“I understand, sir,” Donovan said, burying his disappointment.

“Churchill mentioned that he enjoyed your visit with him in England. He must have been quite impressed to grant you unlimited access to British classified information. Was it your sharing of war stories that won him over?”

“Perhaps,” Donovan said. “But it might have been the poetry.”

Roosevelt wrinkled his forehead.

Donovan, recalling the words, looked at the president. “‘A steed, a steed of matchlesse speed, a sword of metal keene. All else to noble heartes is drosse, all else on earth is meane.’”

The president grinned.

“It’s the beginning of a nineteenth-century poem, ‘The Cavalier’s Song’ by William Motherwell. Churchill and I both knew the poem, which we recited together—word for word.”

“What’s it about?”

“Courage. Honor. And the calling to be a warrior.”

Roosevelt’s face turned somber. “I see why the poem resonates with you.”

Donovan rubbed his knee, where he’d been hit by a bullet during the Great War. “The American public has been called upon to fight, Mr. President. And I have no doubt that—in the end—we’ll win this war and liberate the world from fascist tyranny.”

“Yes, we will,” Roosevelt said.

Donovan adjusted the briefcase on his lap. “I have one more request, sir.”

“I’m open to hearing it—as long as it doesn’t take away resources from the army and navy.”

“It won’t.”

“Good,” Roosevelt said.

“With your approval, I’d like to establish a committee to acquire enemy newspapers, books, and periodicals for American war agencies. As you’re aware, we’re using the Library of Congress to support the intelligence needs of the COI, but we lack capabilities to acquire Axis documents.”

“Do you have a name for this committee?” Roosevelt asked.

“IDC—it’s short for the Interdepartmental Committee for the Acquisition of Foreign Publications.”

“I can see why you shortened it,” Roosevelt said. “And who will staff this special group?”

“Librarians.”

Roosevelt’s eyes widened.

“Microfilm specialists to be precise,” Donovan said. “The agents will be deployed to neutral European cities, such as Lisbon and Stockholm. They’ll pose as American officials collecting materials for the Library of Congress—which is attempting to preserve books and periodicals during the current world crisis. However, the agents will order Axis publications through bookstores and secret channels. Once publications are acquired, the agents will microfilm them—reducing size and weight—and they’ll be transported to COI intelligence staff in either the US or London for analysis.”

“I suppose you have someone in mind to lead this committee,” Roosevelt said.

“Frederick G. Kilgour from Harvard University Library,” Donovan said. “I believe he’s well-suited for the job.”

For the next several minutes Donovan explained details of his proposed committee, all the while fielding questions from the president.

“Librarians,” Roosevelt muttered. He picked up a pen and rolled it between his fingers. “Are you sure about this?”

“They’re precisely who we need to gain enemy intelligence.” Donovan leaned in. “Sir, it’s critical for us to station microfilm experts in Europe.”

Roosevelt paused, retrieving a slip of paper. “Interdepartmental Committee—what’s it called again?”

“Interdepartmental Committee for the Acquisition of Foreign Publications—IDC.”

Roosevelt scribbled on his paper. “Deliver details of the proposal to Grace by this afternoon, and I’ll sign an executive order by day’s end. But in the future, I expect the names of your committees to be short enough for people to remember them.”

“I’ll do my best, sir. Thank you.” A swell of triumph rose up within him. He removed a document from his briefcase and placed it on the president’s desk. “I’ve taken the liberty of drafting an executive order.”

“You’re always one step ahead of me,” Roosevelt said, setting aside his pen and paper.

“I like to be prepared,” Donovan said. “And things get done faster by cutting out the red tape.”

Roosevelt tilted his head. “Bill, you might be the most anti-bureaucratic person in Washington.”

“I’ll take that as a compliment, sir.” Donovan stood and shook the president’s hand. “Good luck with the Arcadia Conference.”

“Godspeed with sending your microfilm experts to Europe,” Roosevelt said.

Donovan left the White House and walked in the direction of his nearby office building. As he passed near the Lincoln Memorial, he gazed at the temple in honor of the sixteenth president of the United States, Abraham Lincoln. His patriotism surged. He quickened his pace and made mental notes for his plans to turn librarians into warriors.

PART 1

ENLISTMENT

CHAPTER 1

NEW YORK CITY, UNITED STATES—MAY 19, 1942

On the day librarians were recruited for the war, Maria Alves was microfilming historical newspapers in the Department of Microphotography of the New York Public Library. She peered through the viewer of a Leica 35mm camera, purchased by the library through a research grant, and adjusted the lens. A May 1933 article with an image of a Nazi book burning in Berlin's Opera Square came into focus. Gathered around a huge bonfire, fueled by over twenty thousand books, were scores of university students with their arms raised in a *Sieg Heil* salute. A wave of disgust rolled over her. She steadied her hands and pressed the shutter release, producing a soft metallic click.

“Our preservation of records will ensure that people never forget the wicked things that Nazism has done to the world,” Maria said to Roy, a bespectacled thirty-year-old microfilm specialist working at an adjacent desk.

“I hope so,” Roy said with an unlit pipe clenched in his mouth. He glanced at Maria's newspaper article and frowned. “I wish we could've saved all those books. It sickens me how much liberal and pacifist philosophy was lost in that fire.”

“Me too,” Maria said. “But I'm far more concerned about what might be happening to Jews in Europe.”

Sadness filled his eyes. He nodded, then loaded a fresh roll of microfilm into his camera.

The Department of Microphotography—a small windowless room on the basement level of the library in Midtown Manhattan—contained two wooden desks, rows of film cabinets, a Valoy enlarger for printmaking, and a Recordak Library Film Reader that resembled a doctor's light box for viewing X-rays. The air was stagnant, due to inadequate ventilation, and it contained a faint, nutty scent of Roy's pipe tobacco, despite that he never smoked while inside the library. Although the room lacked airflow, the climate was cool and dry for storing film. And the isolated space permitted the team of two microfilm specialists, Maria and Roy, to work with little, if