

# **TRENCHCOATS ARE NOT JUST FOR SPIES**

## **How Journalists Fought Against Evil in World War II as Portrayed by Novelist Alan Furst**

**By Yael Swerdlow**

The inner life of a journalist is required by the ethics of the trade to stay hidden. Timeless debate over whether or not a reporter can be balanced, fair and objective stems from accusations that a journalist is able to set aside *who they are*, and *what they believe in* to do their jobs as trusted members of the Fourth Estate. Journalists are expected to witness history, not actively work to change its course. Alan Furst's novels question that dictum. What happens to the image of the journalist in popular culture when the journalist becomes an active participant in the fight against evil? The hidden life of the journalist then becomes the clandestine life of a spy.

Historical spy novelist Alan Furst deftly blurs the boundaries between journalism and espionage, contrasting the secret world of spy craft with the press mandate of the public's right to know. In three historical spy novels featuring journalists as protagonists, Furst's characters share more than just a trademark wardrobe choice with their clandestine counterparts, creating a much different image of the journalist as strictly a witness to history. The trench coat is an iconic symbol of espionage and intrigue. It is worn by those involved in the trade described by MI-6 operative S. Kolb as "a traditional service, operating on three C's: Crown, Capital and Clergy<sup>1</sup>", and by *Blood of Victory* émigré journalist I.A. Serebin, *Dark Star* Pravda foreign correspondent Andre Szara, and Carlo Weisz, protagonist of *The Foreign Correspondent*.

In Furst's pre-World War II Europe, the trench coat may protect against the cold and damp, or be used as a pillow or blanket when on the run. Against moral, ethical and life-threatening dilemmas, however, it offers little comfort or protection.

The foreign correspondent risking his or her life to report the truth during wartime is highly regarded as the ultimate journalist hero.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps no war has more of that romantic glamour than that in which journalists used their pens, typewriters and voices to fight against the evils of fascism, Nazism and communism in Europe during the late 1930s and 1940s.

The foreign correspondents covering World War II had much more leeway to be unabashedly patriotic in their reportage. They were expected to fly the flag of freedom.<sup>3</sup> It was generally accepted on the domestic front that the big city crime reporter's reporting of the headline-grabbing story occasionally blurred into helping the authorities solve the

case. Once posted abroad and newly christened as a foreign correspondent, the reporter did much the same thing, albeit on a larger stage. One of Alfred Hitchcock's films, *Foreign Correspondent*, illustrates this in the character of crime reporter Johnny Jones, morphing into foreign correspondent Huntley Haverstock.<sup>4</sup>

However, the protagonists of Alan Furst's historical novels cross that line into active espionage, using their profession solely as cover for their clandestine activities. They do not engage in journalistic practice for its own sake.

The heart and soul that characterize each of these men is their love, loyalty and intense longing for their homeland. All three, Andre Szara, I.A. Serebin and Carlo Weisz, have fled their countries and are taking refuge in Paris. All have had their hearts broken by the rise of Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini, and will do anything to stop these tyrants from destroying their country further. Furst's reoccurring theme is patriotism, the fight against evil regimes and the different forms of resistance that fight takes. His protagonists are defined more by their identity as émigrés than by their careers as journalists.

Furst's image of the journalist contrasts with the image of the journalist in films made during World War II. For example, Hitchcock's classic *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), along with *Somewhere I'll Find You* (1942), *Berlin Correspondent* (1942), *Comrade X* (1940), and others portrayed foreign correspondents as courageous reporters fighting for their country simply by doing what tenacious journalists do: find a story with larger implications and risk their lives to report it.<sup>5</sup> These brave men and women cover events and report the truth back to the folks back home. Virtually none of these films

features the journalist/protagonist as an émigré fighting for his country using purely clandestine means.

## II. ANDRE SZARA

In *Dark Star*, Andre Szara is a Pravda foreign correspondent posted in Paris in 1937, two years before Hitler invades Poland and World War II officially begins.<sup>6</sup> A Polish born, Soviet Bolshevik Jew, and the most Jewish of Furst's three protagonists, Szara was already a seasoned survivor of the Polish pogroms and the Russian civil wars. At the age of six, Szara found his father half-buried by mud in the street, beaten to death with a pig's tail stuffed in his mouth.<sup>7</sup>

Szara's identity as a Polish Jew is what defines and drives him, training him in the skills to survive the daily onslaught of anti-Semitism: disguise, duplicity, not showing anger, and ultimately, becoming invisible.<sup>8</sup> His hometown of the Pale of Settlement in Odessa was known for its talented gene pool: Jewish intellectuals who knew the capitals of Europe, were fluent in their languages, wrote passionately and well, and, most important for their handlers, had a great appetite and talent for the clandestine life.<sup>9</sup> When the Soviet secret intelligence service approach Szara to become a full time spy in Paris, he's already adept at living life in the shadows due more to his religion than his investigative reporter skills.

Consistent with the image of the journalist in fiction and in real life,<sup>10</sup> Szara looks the part. Furst describes him as "a man invented, a man of the air."<sup>11</sup> "Longish black hair, 40 years old, tight line of the jaw, concentration of personality in the eyes...hooded, knowing, of a gray-green sea color that women had more than once called 'strange' and

often read as both expectant and sorrowful, like dogs eyes. His features were delicate, skin colorless, made to seem pallid by a permanent beard shadow. It was, taken altogether, a sad, attentive presence, anxious for happiness, certain of disappointment. He dressed the role of worldly intellectual, favoring soft clothing: thick gray cotton shirts, monochromatic ties in the somber tones of basic colors. He was, in the world's mirror, a man you could take seriously, at least for a time. Then, later, there would be affection or intense dislike, a strong reaction whichever way it went."<sup>12</sup>

Szara shares some of the more emotional characteristics ascribed to the journalist mystique from novels, especially the heroes of Ernest Hemingway's novels.<sup>13</sup> For example, he admires determination in the face of hopeless circumstances.

Life, or, merely surviving the twin hells of Hitler's Third Reich and Stalin's murderous purges, matters to him more than anything else. As a journalist, he'd become adept at the art of being careful with what he wrote, what he did and who he saw. Szara Balances his reporting ability with sensitivity concerning what could and could not be written depending on the wind blowing from both Berlin and Moscow. Both skills contribute to his success as a correspondent and to the amount of freedom to move freely.<sup>14</sup> Furst describes Szara as developing the instincts of a priest: knowledge that evil exists and dedication to working productively within its confines.<sup>15</sup>

When the novel begins, Szara is already somewhat famous as a foreign correspondent. His romantic life is the subject of much speculation by those around him, enviously teasing him about the "professors' daughters and lawyers' wives; those hot, skinny bitches that can't leave a journalist alone..."<sup>16</sup> His status as a correspondent even protects him from some of the Soviet actions against refugees, although he is warned by

his official “friend” from the NKVD Foreign Department, Sergei Abramov, not to test how far that protection might go.<sup>17</sup>

Even though he has his “khvost,” his clique and his gang, comprised of NKVD friends, Russified Polish Jews or Latvians, Ukrainians and a smattering of German intellectuals, Szara is by nature a loner. He avoids the Tass and Pravda pack of reporters who run the circuit of European capitals.<sup>18</sup> To the dismay of his spy bosses, he routinely avoids the de rigueur journalists’ haunts and parties to go off on his on his own. At one point, Szara’s NKVD handler, Goldman tells him, “Be a journalist!....Well, you are one, of course, very good, yes, but you must now make a special effort to live the life, and to be seen to live the life, one would expect of such a person. Go about, seek out your colleagues, haunt the right cafes. No slinking around, it’s what I mean. Of course you’ll see the necessity of it, yes.”<sup>19</sup>

He does. Immediately, Szara embraces the foreign correspondent’s public life. He drinks wine and eats oysters at Le Dome, attends a few political briefings, covers a day or two of the latest murder trial, flirts with women in bookstores, and is a frequent guest at just the most exclusive intellectual salons. He even stops by the Pravda office to collect his messages. In these actions, he appears consistent with the common image of journalists.<sup>20</sup> His cover remains intact. So, when once in a while, Andre Szara disappears for a day or two, it’s a disappearance similar to many of his compatriots in Paris.<sup>21</sup>

But A.A. Szara, the journalist in the rumpled raincoat with a French newspaper rolled up in one pocket,<sup>22</sup> is shredded inside. Already unhappy about selling his soul to the

NKVD and secretly abandoning his profession, Szara seethes at the Russian irony of being ordered to behave as someone he no longer is.<sup>23</sup>

As part of his cover, Szara is told to “write something. Nothing meaningful, just some filler article.”<sup>24</sup> Later his handlers are more specific describing their plans: “Now...pick up your ingenious pen and go to work. Try one of those intellectual French journals guaranteed to give you a headache and start shaping the dialogue. If there were some way to co-opt the argument itself—you know, by stating the initial questions—life would be perfect.”<sup>25</sup> Szara, against his will, becomes the voice of Russia speaking out from foreign lands.<sup>26</sup>

All the while, Szara deflects suspicion of his true purpose “with his sad and knowing smile,”<sup>27</sup> which communicates compassion created from his life as a listener who can be told the deepest and darkest secrets without fear of judgment.<sup>28</sup> He displays skills of both journalist and spy.

*Dark Star* is the story of the fate of Europe’s Jews as Hitler secretly romances Stalin, planning the carving up of Poland between them. As his spy network uncovers more of Stalin’s planned betrayal of the Allied cause, Szara becomes more and more desperate to save his fellow Jews who face deportation and death at the hands of the Nazis once the ink on the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact dries.<sup>29</sup> But, in the end, Szara is forced to abandon his cherished life as a foreign correspondent, changing identities while on the run, and finally becoming a refugee himself when “the reality of circumstances intervenes.”<sup>30</sup>

III. I.A. SEREBIN

In *Blood of Victory*, Russian émigré journalist Ilya Aleksandrovich Serebin, formerly a decorated Hero of the Soviet Union, Second Class, faces his fifth war.<sup>31</sup> Born to Mother Russia, his service had “never been dramatic, just expected.” In 1915, even though he was just 17 years old, as a newly commissioned sub lieutenant in the Russian artillery, his father said, “We always go.”<sup>32</sup>

When the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 broke out, Serebin joined the Red Army. Then, in 1922 war with Poland began, and Serebin was ordered to serve as a war correspondent by the office of the commissar. Finally, he was ordered to go to Spain to cover the Spanish Civil War, his *Izvestia* editor claiming that his nonexistent knowledge of Spanish would give him objectivity.<sup>33</sup> The same mentality permeates the Hitchcock film *Foreign Correspondent* when the publisher of the newspaper is thrilled that his crime-beat reporter doesn't know a damn thing about the “crisis in Europe.”<sup>34</sup>

Half Russian aristocrat, half Bolshevik Jew, Serebin considers himself an expert in the matter of running, hiding, and not caring.<sup>35</sup> He refers to the traditional ballad of the Serebin clan as “Shut Up and Sit Still.”<sup>36</sup> He is from Odessa, 42 years old, lean and dark, of average height with longish black hair and tense restless eyes that, to his chagrin, “give away his fire inside.”<sup>37</sup>

Already well known for his first book, The Silver Tower, written at age 28, Serebin is considered a poet in international literary circles. Serebin is “a free spirit, learning everything the hard way.”<sup>38</sup> He believed it was his fate “that life smacked him in the head every chance it got, then paid him back in women.”<sup>39</sup>



Contrary to the image of journalist as muckraker<sup>40</sup>, or reporter hot on the trail of the nefarious, Serebin never really has had any burning desire to catch anyone at anything.<sup>41</sup> His life is polarized between highs and lows, with him more at home in the lows, which suits him just fine.<sup>42</sup> Serebin doesn't actually write much, citing his need for a "visit from the muse" as a constant excuse.<sup>43</sup>

In the fall of 1940, Serebin leaves his beloved Paris for Istanbul. He visits Tamara, his childhood sweetheart, whom he has rescued from a Soviet tuberculosis clinic and ensconced in a house on the Turkish coast. Bored, with little to occupy his time, Serebin visits the Turkish arm of the International Russian Union, where he holds the position of Secretary. The leaders happily greet him; he's the guest of honor and a young girl reads a poem about Odessa, Serebin's hometown. He listens, touched. A phone call interrupts the party. Serebin is called outside to wait for a friend, and suddenly the office explodes. The bomb also serves to detonate his detachment from the evil that surrounds him.

Later, as Serebin recounts the tragedy to Tamara, she tells him, "this terrible war. It will come for you."<sup>44</sup> Serebin knows she's right. A few moments later, Tamara reminds him "please to remember who we are and where we've been. First you say you'll pretend to do what they want, then you do what they want, then you're one of them. Oldest story in the world: if you don't stand up to evil it eats you first and kills you later, but not soon enough."<sup>45</sup> Then she tells him he will die inside if he tries to hide from "it."<sup>46</sup>

Meanwhile, Serebin is being watched by the British Secret Service. They recruit him for a clandestine mission: a second and last-ditch effort to stop the feeding of the Nazi war machine on Romanian oil.

Serebin accepts. This is not at all a surprise to his current lover, Marie-Galante, who tells him that honor and good faith are in his nature, and that he is who he is, a man without a country, a soldier of the world.<sup>47</sup>

However, for much of *Blood of Victory*, Serebin is more of a patriotic émigré than a journalist on assignment. He believes the reason the Brits hired him is his status as a “minor Russian writer, émigré.”<sup>48</sup> In other words, he tends to leave his trench coat in the armoire.<sup>49</sup>

#### IV. CARLO WEISZ

Early in *The Foreign Correspondent*, protagonist Carlo Weisz is contacted by a Mr. Brown, presenting himself as a businessman. Weisz muses that he’s reasonably certain Mr. Brown is an agent of the British Secret Intelligence Service, and that he’s just been approached, possibly with the intention of being recruited.<sup>50</sup>

Indicative of how much journalists view themselves similar to spies, Weisz rationalizes this occurrence is nothing out of the ordinary, because “spies and journalists were fated to go through life together, and it was sometimes hard to tell one from the other. Their jobs weren’t all that different: they talked to politicians, developed sources in government bureaus, and dug around for secrets. Sometimes, they talked to, and

traded with, one another. And, now and again, a journalist worked directly for the secret services.”<sup>51</sup>

Carlo Weisz did not have a driving ambition to be a newsman. He became a journalist almost by default, in defiance of his cold and autocratic father, who had young Weisz’s future as an economist all planned out.<sup>52</sup> The 40 year old Weisz was born in Trieste and is half Italian, half Slovenian, of medium height, lean and compact, with long dark hair, a strong, Florentine face, and gray, soft questioning eyes.<sup>53</sup> He was educated at the Scuola Normale, an imitation of the revered Ecole Normale in Paris, reputed to be the bastion of the aristocracy. From there, he studied political economics at the University of Pisa and then was sent off to Oxford University for two years until he realized, with the help of one of his tutors, he wasn’t cut out for the academic life, either as a student or as a professor. He dropped out.<sup>54</sup>

His friends suggest journalism while hanging out in cafes in Trieste. “You should be a journalist,” they tell him. “See the world.”<sup>55</sup> His father, furious, nonetheless pulls strings, and Weisz gets a job at Italy’s top newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*, based in Milan. Weisz works harder than ever, but not because of a newfound passion for journalism: his motivation is simply fear of failure.<sup>56</sup>

When Mussolini passes restrictive press laws during the early 1920s, life for journalists becomes difficult. Weisz sees his co-workers attacked, beaten up. He flees to Paris rather than wait for it to get worse. Weisz is back to hanging out in cafes again, reading newspapers and looking for work as a reporter.

After seven months, Weisz gets lucky. The bureau chief of Reuters, who's down a reporter, hires him.

Of all of Furst's journalist/protagonists, Carlo Weisz engages in a much more subtle form of deception. The British Secret Intelligence Service recruits him precisely because of his skills as a writer to pen an inspirational story of a hero of the Spanish Civil War, to inspire Italians to resist Mussolini. However, at the same time, he is the editor of *Liberazione*, writing for the clandestine émigré newspaper, under the pen name of Palestrina. At one point, Weisz mulls over a possible topic designed to shake up the Italian government, thinking, "An inspired clandestine journalist, anyhow, writing a short, simple article about German agents at the heart of the Italian security system."<sup>57</sup>

Having taken refuge in Paris along with the cream of Italian intellectual society, Weisz fights Mussolini's fascist government with typewriter and printing press. *The Foreign Correspondent* is the story of the founding of the Italian Resistance's newspaper movement, centered on the production of 512 clandestine newspapers.

Consistent with the 1940s image of the foreign correspondent in constant danger while trying to uncover and report the story, Weisz is pursued by the French Surete (French Security), by agents of the OVRA (the secret police of Mussolini and by officers of the British Secret Intelligence Service. The political life in Europe on the brink of war made Carlo Weisz, foreign correspondent *and* émigré, worth keeping under surveillance.<sup>58</sup>

## V. OTHER JOURNALISTS

The other images of journalists in Furst's three novels are clichéd. There are tyrannical editors, gossip columnists who sleep with highly placed officials' wives, publishers with agendas to match their deep pockets, and well-intentioned but slightly jaded freelancers who write from anywhere there is a byline and a buck.<sup>59</sup>

In *Dark Star*, Szara's boss is savage-tempered foreign editor Viktor Nezhenko, who smokes 60 cigarettes a day and makes life miserable for his staff. But even more important to Szara is Herbert Hull, the editor with a new American magazine, who plays a large role in Szara's mission. Hull is a veteran journalist who worked for the pedigree magazines of *The Nation* and *The New Republic*. He displays that casual loose-jointed posture that immediately identifies him to Szara as an American. Hull offers Szara the opportunity to write the secret history of Russia's revolutionary history--of course, under a pen name.<sup>60</sup>

In *Blood of Victory*, the manager of the International Russian Union in Istanbul is Serge Kubalsky, a one-time successful "boulevard journalist" for a St. Petersburg newspaper which printed all news fit to be unsubstantiated. Caught in *flagrante delicto* with the wife of a very important official, Kubalsky flees across Europe country by country until he ends up in Istanbul.<sup>61</sup> Violently attacked, he comes to Serebin for help and begins to describe what happened, when he becomes, as Serebin realizes, a "creature whose body ran on smoke instead of blood. And for that moment...he became once again what he'd been all his life—The Journalist. For the gossip papers, the timber

news, the mining gazette, writing a paragraph and counting the words, showing up at an office to see about his check.”<sup>62</sup>

As a part of his clandestine assignment, Serebin schedules a meeting with the British foreign correspondent James Carr, working out of the Reuters bureau in Bucharest. Carr is described as a standard of the breed of journalist: tall but stooped, a touch of Anglo-Saxon decadence in an otherwise handsome face, dirty blond hair in need of a cut and a good blazer. His trench coat carelessly hangs on the office clothes tree stashed in the corner.<sup>63</sup>

The most extensively detailed journalist appears in *The Foreign Correspondent* as Weisz’s boss, Delahanty, Reuters’ Paris bureau chief. Here, Furst uses another well-known image: the editor as the scrappy, up-from-the-streets newspaperman, who rose from the ranks to command the top post. True to the cliché, he inspires Weisz to be the best reporter he can be. He becomes father figure and mentor for Weisz.

Delahanty is older, with white hair and blue eyes. Self-educated, he taught himself to read in French, Spanish and Greek, a pursuit that impresses Weisz tremendously.

In his “job interview,” Delahanty fires off both the questions and answers, bringing to mind the rat-a-tat style of dialogue of 1940s films. “Now let me be frank, here we do things the Reuters way, you’ll learn the rules, all you have to do is follow ‘em. And I have to tell you that you won’t be *the* Reuters man in Paris. But you’ll be *a* Reuters man, and that ain’t so bad. It’s what I was, and I wrote about every damn thing under the sun. So tell me, how does that sit with you sir? Can you do it? Ride on trains

and mule cars and whatnot and get us the story? With emotion? With a feel for the human side, for the prime minister at his grand desk and the peasant on his little patch of earth? You believe you can? I know you can! And you'll do just fine. So, why not get down to it straight away? Say, tomorrow? The previous incumbent, well, a week ago, he went up to Holland and passed out in the queen's lap. It's the curse of this profession, Mr. Weisz, I'm sure you know that. Very well, do you have any questions? None? Alright, then..."<sup>64</sup>

Delahanty even looks the part: the perfectly rumped worker, with his jacket off, his sleeves rolled up, trousers baggy but forced to hang low due to a big belly. In sending Weisz to cover Berlin, Delahanty instructs him: "You know the drill: they'll take you out to eat, feed you propaganda, you'll file, we won't publish, but, if I don't cover, that little Weasel will start a war on me, just for spite, and we wouldn't want that, would we."<sup>65</sup>

Delahanty epitomizes the journalist mantra: if your mother says she loves you, check it out.<sup>66</sup> When Delahanty calls Weisz into his office, Weisz is sure he's been found out and is going to be fired. Weisz's extracurricular activities have been found out, but Delahanty's response is not what Weisz expects:

"I asked myself, what's the hell's going on with him? Emigres are always up to something, the way the world sees it, but work has to come first. And I'm not saying it hasn't, almost always, since you started here. You've been faithful and true, on time, on the story, and no nonsense with the expense reports. But then, well, I didn't know what was going on...Sir Roderick and his crowd, well, if they value anything, they value

patriotism, the old roar of the British lion...” He finishes his lecture by wishing Weisz good luck on ‘this other matter.’<sup>67</sup>

In Berlin, Weisz goes to the Foreigners Club on Leipzigerplatz, described as functioning as a press club with enough perks to make journalists think they’d died and gone to journalist heaven: a gourmet restaurant, loudspeakers to page reporters, reading rooms full of newspapers from every major city, and workrooms with long rows of desks with typewriters and telephones.<sup>68</sup> There, Weisz is instructed by the Nazi who runs the press club that they will read what he writes in the newspapers and they expect him to be “fair.” Delahanty was right.

Furst portrays the managing director of Reuters in London, Sir Roderick Jones, as “a famous tyrant, a holy terror. Sir Roderick wears the ties of schools he’d never attended, implied service in regiments he was too short to have served with.”<sup>69</sup> Furst adds additional layers of snobbery to the managing director’s vain character: Sir Roderick makes an employee jump on the rubber pad in the street to turn the traffic light green moments before his chauffeured Rolls approaches, and berates a servant for not ironing his shoelaces.<sup>70</sup> Consistent with some images of newspaper bosses from 1940s films, it is Sir Roderick, who, valuing above all Weisz’s patriotism and courage, convinces the British Secret Service to save Weisz’s lover’s life.<sup>71</sup>



## VI. THE WOMEN: LOVE IN THE TIME OF WAR

All of these novels are incredibly romantic stories set in this time of evil and darkness. The theme is that love triumphs over all.<sup>72</sup> Ultimately, love motivates the three protagonists. Furst's women characters are seductive, courageous, gorgeous and strong, and not the least bit femme fatales dependent upon men. All are equally heroic and are just as committed to the righteous cause.

At some point in each of the novels, it is revealed that these women have married either for convenience or as part of their mission. Adding to the danger of their love affairs is the adultery and betrayal of their husbands, who are, without exception, powerful men, able to either harm or rescue. In the 1940s films, the women are either one of the boys, or chaste or innocent. These European sirens exude sexuality and have the great philosophy of the romantic fatalist, something the American girls lack.

Andre Szara continually falls in love. He is a man who "presses his face against the skin of a woman to inhale such fragrance as makes him want to cry out with joy. He was that man who spins between tenderness and raging lust like a helpless top, who wakes up on fire every morning, and spends his hours thinking of only one thing—yet how brilliantly he thinks of it."<sup>73</sup> His wife died long ago, in the civil war in Berdichev, and a large part of Szara had died with her. He finds some comfort in the role of ladies' man, but then he falls in love with the woman he's supposed to use in the spy network.

This new love of Andre Szara is Nadia Tscherov, an actress who is a spy for the Russians. Pragmatic, she does her duty because, as she puts it, they "offered a choice between death and money, I chose money."<sup>74</sup> Szara falls in love with her almost

immediately and is devastated to know she has cyanide with her at all times lest she get caught. Her vulnerability obsesses him. He is tortured by the conjured-up image of her collapsed in a corner should she be forced to commit suicide. Szara's overwhelming need is to protect women and this, in his mind, makes him a bad intelligence officer, for he will not sacrifice her.<sup>75</sup> Everything he does from then on has one motivation: to save her life. He arranges for her to escape Berlin, and they are reunited.<sup>76</sup>

The lover of I.A. Serebin, Marie-Galante, says it all in her name: "Galante" is French slang for Female Spy. A well-connected society figure, Marie-Galante is by far the sexiest of the three heroines. One can imagine only the most seductive screen sirens cast as her. French, she describes herself as a "Burgundian, dark and passionate. We love money and cook everything in butter...and, go home in the morning."<sup>77</sup> It is her husband, a Vichy diplomat, who intercedes on Serebin's behalf, enabling Marie-Galante and Serebin to run away together to Istanbul.

The great love of Carlo Weisz is Christa von Schirren, a member of an underground resistance in Berlin, married to "an old, rich Prussian." Her activities bring her to the attention of the Gestapo. Just when they are closing in, Weisz implores Reuters' Sir Roderick to pull some strings at the British Secret Service and smuggle her out of Berlin. Sir Roderick, valuing Weisz's patriotism in both writing Colonel Ferrera's story and risking his life as the editor of *Liberazione*, agrees and rescues her, putting her into Weisz's arms.<sup>78</sup>

## VII. PARIS

All three of the novels use the City of Lights as one of the main characters. Paris is a living, breathing entity, much loved and longed for when fled. In an interview, novelist Furst said that, for him, “the *central magneto* of the engine driving his novels is Paris,” because, as he puts it, Paris is the heart of civilization.<sup>79</sup> Furst added that Adolph Hitler gloated that when he captured Paris, he’d captured the heart of European civilization.

In *Blood of Victory*, Serebin explains his love of the city to Tamara: “When France fell, that day, I was Parisian, more than I’d ever been. We all were. Exiles were born in the 5<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement... it didn’t matter. Everyone said *merde*—it was bad luck, bad weather, we would just have to learn to live with it. But we would all stay the same, so we told each other, because, if we changed, then the fascists would win. Maybe I knew better, in my heart, but I wanted to believe that that was enough: hold fast to life as it should be, the daily ritual, work, love, and then it will be.”<sup>80</sup>

Andre Szara knew there was always a story to be found in Paris, plus he craved breathing the unhealthy, healing air of that city.<sup>81</sup>

And for Carlo Weisz, Paris is his refuge away from the fascists of Italy, but, more importantly, the headquarters for his clandestine newspapers.

Ivan Kostyka, the “renown industrialist” in *Blood of Victory*, says, “For every man there are three cities. The city of his birth, the city he loves, and the city where he must live.”<sup>82</sup>

## VIII. BOOZE AND CIGARETTES

Reading these novels made me regret I've quit smoking. I wanted nothing more than to buy a pack of Sobranie cigarettes (the brand of I.A. Serebin), pour a shot of vodka or Scotch, and make believe. All three characters are chain smokers.

Booze figures heavily into the stories. Characters seeking escape from their lives try to drown their sorrows in long nights of drunkenness. This is consistent with the image of the journalist as a hard-drinking, chimney-smoking, and hard-living story-churning charmer.<sup>83</sup> But it is also the timeless cliché of the European intellectual.

## IX. CONCLUSION

Alan Furst's historical spy novels explore the journalist's inner life as each actively engages in espionage in Europe on the eve of World War II. His protagonists are motivated by the commitment to fight against tyranny. They utilize their profession only as cover for their acts of defiance instead of using journalism as their means of resistance.

Each of the three journalists, Andre Szara, I.A. Serebin, and Carlo Weisz is an émigré. Their worlds are hydra-headed torments, forced silent rages and a life increasingly lived in the shadows. They watch almost helplessly as their homelands, lovers, compatriots and strangers, some of them Jews suffering the initial hell of Hitler's Final Solution, are destroyed by Nazism, fascism and communism.

The journalists portrayed in the films from the 1940s are innocently aggressive, on the trail of a big scoop. They want to break the story, marry the dame--who just

happens to be the very important daughter of someone the reporter is either chasing, or working for. They have little time for moral reflection, or questioning. These journalists, whether they be Huntley Haverstock in *Foreign Correspondent* (1940) or Bill Roberts in *Berlin Correspondent* (1942), almost make covering war a grand adventure, with very little debate about the morality and costs of war. To be sure, these journalists are patriotic, never questioning the Allied cause. But they are cavalier and innocent. These foreign correspondents are *Americans*. They have not had their country invaded, occupied, or bombed. The movies of the 1940s reflected this sentiment. They were intentionally ignorant of the direction history was headed.

In contrast, Furst's novels are set in Europe during the beginning of World War II. More important, they are set a mere two decades *after* the end of World War I, the Russian Revolution and the civil wars and Stalinist purges that followed. World War I claimed over 40 million casualties, including civilian and military wounded and dead. All of Europe and Russia, now the Soviet Union, was a blood soaked graveyard.

The characters of Szara, Serebin and Weisz are marked deeply by recent history. They engage in espionage not just to save their own lives, but also to fight the evil that threatens to destroy millions of lives once again. Furst's characters *do* question the morality of war. More important, Furst's characters question the morality of merely reporting the truth as if it were enough to prevent the triumph over tyranny.

In this way, *Dark Star* (1991) *Blood of Victory* (2001) and *The Foreign Correspondent* (2006) reflect the sensibilities of the post-Vietnam era film reporters. The morality of the war correspondent as chasers of the scoop was questioned in *The Killing*

*Fields* (1984) and *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1983). Those correspondents wrestled between their professional responsibility to report events objectively and to actively intervene to prevent the evil swirling around them. Ultimately, each receives their moral comeuppance as the lure of the scoop drives their behavior.

Even though *Dark Star*'s Szara and *The Foreign Correspondent*'s Weisz long to be just a reporter again, they know merely covering the events leading up to World War II would not be enough to stop Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini. Here, Furst's protagonist reflects the character of photojournalist Russell Price in *Under Fire* (1983). The film makes the point that the crisis of conscience inherent in merely observing suffering and dying around you is only solved when the correspondent becomes an active participant. The primary theme expressed in *Under Fire* is that in the battle between freedom and tyranny, neutrality is immoral<sup>84</sup>.

A former journalist, Alan Furst's novels regularly showing up on the best-seller lists of the New York Times. He is known as the master of the historical spy novel, not for his use of the image of the journalist to raise larger, morality-based questions regarding the obligations to act in the face of evil. Nevertheless, with the protagonists of *Dark Star*, *Blood of Victory* and *The Foreign Correspondent*, he succeeds in furthering that debate.

ENDNOTES:

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<sup>1</sup> In *The Foreign Correspondent*, S. Kolb, the spy from MI 6, describes his employers, saying, “we’re a traditional service, and we operate on the classic assumptions. Which means we concentrate on the three C’s: Crown, Capital and Clergy. He continues... “forgive me, Weisz, for being frank with you, but it’s the same with journalists--journalists work for other people, for Capital, and that’s who gets to tell them what to write.” Alan Furst, *The Foreign Correspondent*, Random House, 2006, p.165

<sup>2</sup> Foreign correspondents were journalist heroes and even thought of as national folk heroes during World War II. Joe Saltzman, *The Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture*, Journalism 375/Communication 372, Syllabus, Fall 2002, Class Nine Introduction, p. 62

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit. Class One Introduction: p. 23

<sup>4</sup> *Foreign Correspondent*, 1940, (running time 120 minutes) black and white, Warner Bros. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock, written by Charles Bennet and Joan Harrison

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Salzman, *The Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture*, Journalism 375/Communication 372, Syllabus, Fall 2002, Class Nine Introduction, p. 65

<sup>6</sup> World War II officially began on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1939, two days after Hitler invaded Poland.

<sup>7</sup> Alan Furst, *Dark Star*, Random House Trade Paperback, 1991, 437 pages, p. 59

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 59

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 59

<sup>10</sup> Timeless wardrobe of journalists, from Hemingway’s clothes in photographs to the characters portrayed in *All The Presidents Men* (1976)

<sup>11</sup> Alan Furst, *Dark Star*, p. 58

<sup>12</sup> Op. cit. p. 10

<sup>13</sup> Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast*, MacMillan Publishing Company, 1964  
Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Simon and Schuster, 1940

<sup>14</sup> Alan Furst, *Dark Star*, p. 44

<sup>15</sup> Op. cit. p. 79

<sup>16</sup> Op. cit. p. 6

<sup>17</sup> Op. cit. p. 181

<sup>18</sup> Op. cit. p. 21

<sup>19</sup> Op. cit. p. 113

<sup>20</sup> Joe Saltzman, *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film*, IJPC, The Norman Lear Center, The Annenberg School for Communication, University of Southern California, 2002

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*, p 124-125

<sup>22</sup> Alan Furst, *Dark Star*, p. 176

<sup>23</sup> Op. cit., p. 113

<sup>24</sup> Op. cit., p. 206

<sup>25</sup> Op. cit., p. 286

<sup>26</sup> Op. cit., p. 287

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p. 287

<sup>28</sup> Op. cit., p. 241

<sup>29</sup> The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was also known as the Hitler-Stalin Pact and was formally known as the Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the Soviet Union. It was signed in Moscow on August 23, 1939, and included a secret agreement in which independent countries of Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania were divided into designated spheres of interest of either Germany or the Soviet Union. Subsequently, these countries were either invaded or occupied or forced to relinquish part of their territory to the USSR, Germany or both. The treaty lasted until Operation Barbarossa began on June 22, 1941, when Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molotov-Ribbentrop\\_Pact](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molotov-Ribbentrop_Pact) accessed 4/9/07

<sup>30</sup> Alan Furst, *Dark Star*, p 425

<sup>31</sup> Alan Furst, *Blood of Victory*, Random House Trade Paperback, 2002, 237 pages

<sup>32</sup> Op. Cit., p. 56



<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 56-57

<sup>34</sup> *Foreign Correspondent*, 1940, (running time 120 minutes) black and white, Warner Bros. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock, written by Charles Bennet and Joan Harrison

<sup>35</sup> Alan Furst, *Blood of Victory*, p. 5

<sup>36</sup> Op. cit., p. 119

<sup>37</sup> One of Serebin's lovers in Moscow tells him there is something on fire inside him, and that women smell that something burning, and will want to put it out...although there will be some who will want to throw oil on that fire. Alan Furst, *Blood of Victory*, p. 9

<sup>38</sup> Op. cit., p. 10

<sup>39</sup> Op. cit., p. 4

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Jmuckraking.htm> accessed 4/12/07

Investigative journalists such as Lincoln Steffens, Nellie Bly and many others wrote to expose the most evil aspects of society.

<sup>41</sup> Alan Furst, *Blood of Victory*, p. 15

<sup>42</sup> Op. cit., p. 29

<sup>43</sup> Op. cit., p. 15

<sup>44</sup> Op. cit., p. 45

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p. 45

<sup>46</sup> Op. cit., p. 46

<sup>47</sup> Op. cit., p. 119

<sup>48</sup> Op. cit., p. 105

<sup>49</sup> Op. cit., p. 9

<sup>50</sup> Alan Furst, *The Foreign Correspondent*, Random House Hardback, 2006, 273 pages, p. 48

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p. 48

<sup>52</sup> Op. cit., p. 25

<sup>53</sup> Op. cit., p. 12

<sup>54</sup> Op. cit., p. 25

<sup>55</sup> Op. cit., p. 26

<sup>56</sup> Op. cit., p. 27

<sup>57</sup> Op. cit., p. 126

<sup>58</sup> Alan Furst, *The Foreign Correspondent*, Book jacket

<sup>59</sup> Joe Saltzman, *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film*, IJPC, The Norman Lear Center, The Annenberg School for Communication, University of Southern California, 2002

<sup>60</sup> Op. cit., p. 93

<sup>61</sup> Op. cit., p. 17

<sup>62</sup> Op. cit., p. 170

<sup>63</sup> Op. cit., p. 134-135

<sup>64</sup> Op. cit., p. 29

<sup>65</sup> Op. cit., p. 69

<sup>66</sup> Well known journalist mantra: <http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=52&aid=30377> accessed 4/14/07

<sup>67</sup> Alan Furst, *The Foreign Correspondent*, p. 229

<sup>68</sup> Op. cit., p. 137

<sup>69</sup> Op. cit., p. 119

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. p. 119

<sup>71</sup> Op. cit., p. 229

<sup>72</sup> <http://www.identitytheory.com/people/birnbaum9.html> accessed 4/14/07 Interview with Alan Furst, conducted in 2000

<sup>73</sup> Alan Furst, *Dark Star*, p. 96

<sup>74</sup> Op. cit., p. 203

<sup>75</sup> Op. cit., p. 205

<sup>76</sup> Op. cit., p. 437

<sup>77</sup> Alan Furst, *Blood of Victory*, p. 7

<sup>78</sup> Alan Furst, *The Foreign Correspondent*, p. 273

<sup>79</sup> <http://www.identitytheory.com/people/birnbaum9.html> accessed 4/14/07 Interview with Alan Furst, conducted in 2000

<sup>80</sup> Alan Furst, *Blood of Victory*, p. 45

<sup>81</sup> Alan Furst, *Dark Star*, p. 44

<sup>82</sup> Op. cit., p. 49

<sup>83</sup> [http://www.cjrdaily.org/behind\\_the\\_news/charting\\_the\\_connection\\_betwee.php](http://www.cjrdaily.org/behind_the_news/charting_the_connection_betwee.php) accessed 4/14/07 Published in the Winter 2007 *Volume of Journalism History*, "Depression, Drink and Dissipation" finds that almost half of the best people to ever push a noun against a verb in newsprint were debilitated by depression, serious anxiety, or bipolar disorder; over a third were titanic drunks, pill-poppers, or opium-addicts; nearly a third were serial philanderers, and a sizable bunch were misogynists, man-eaters, or violent bullies. In almost every case, the tendency to booze, carouse, or otherwise self-annihilate developed or seriously deepened during their days in journalism."

<sup>84</sup> Howard Good, *Outcasts: The Image of Journalists in Contemporary Film*, The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1989 p 30-67

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