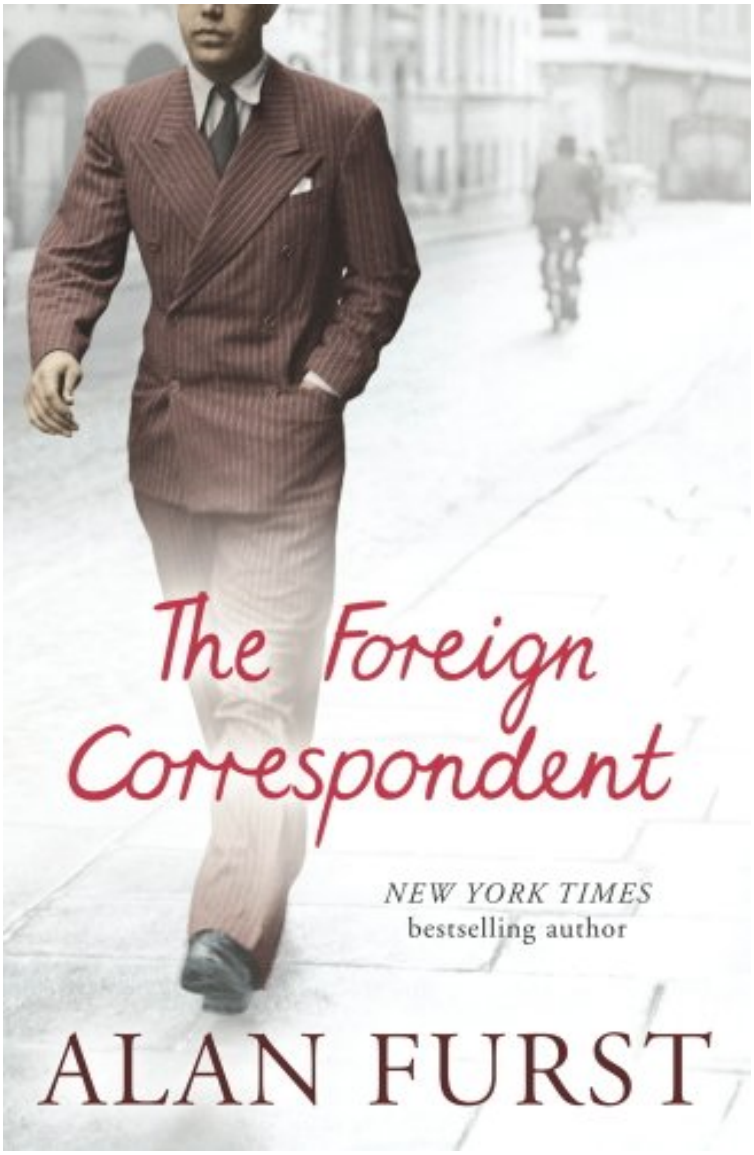
The Foreign Correspondent (English Edition)



Par Alan Furst
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Dtails sur le produit Rang parmi les ventes : #120539 dans eBooksPubli le: 2011-08-25Sorti le: 2011-08-25Format: Ebook Kindle

[Read free] The Foreign Correspondent (English Edition)

Par Alan Furst : The Foreign Correspondent (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Foreign Correspondent (English Edition):

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe next great page-turner from the master of the noir spy novel.By 1939, thousands of Italian intellectuals, teachers and lawyers, journalists and scientists, had fled Mussolini's fascist government and found refuge in Paris. There, amidst the poverty and difficulty of migr life, they joined the Italian resistance, founding an underground press that smuggled news and encouragement back to their lost homeland. In Paris, in the winter of 1939, a murder/suicide at a lovers' hotel hits the tabloid press. But this is not a romantic tragedy, it is the work of OVRA, Mussolini's fascist secret police, and meant to eliminate the editor of Liberazione, a clandestine newspaper published by Italian migrs. Carlo Weisz, who has fled from Trieste and found work as a foreign correspondent for the Reuters bureau, becomes the new editor.Weisz is,

at that moment, in Spain, reporting on the tragic end of the Spanish civil war, but, as soon as he returns to Paris, he is pursued by the French Surete, by agents of OVRA, and by officers of the British Secret Intelligence Service. In the desperate politics of Europe on the edge of war, a foreign correspondent is a pawn, worth surveillance, or blackmail, or murder.The Foreign Correspondent is the story of Carlo Weisz and a handful of anti-fascists -- the army officer known as Colonel Ferrara, who fights for a lost cause in Spain, Arturo Salamone, the shrewd leader of a resistance group in Paris, and the woman who becomes the love of his Weisz's life, herself involved in a doomed resistance underground in Berlin, at the heart of Hitler's Nazi empire.ExtraitIn Paris, the last days of autumn; a gray, troubled sky at daybreak, the fall of twilight at noon, followed, at seven-thirty, by slanting rains and black umbrellas as the people of the city hurried home past the bare trees. On the third of December, 1938, in the heart of the Seventh Arrondissement, a champagne-colored Lancia sedan turned the corner of the rue Saint-Dominique and rolled to a stop in the rue Augereau. Then the man in the backseat leaned forward for a moment and the chauffeur drove a few feet further and stopped again, this time in the shadow between two streetlamps. The man in the back of the Lancia was called Ettore, il conte Amandola--the nineteenth Ettore, Hector, in the Amandola line, and count only the grandest of his titles. Closer to sixty than fifty, he had dark, slightly bulging eyes, as though life had surprised him, though it had never dared to do that, and a pink flush along his cheekbones, which suggested a bottle of wine with lunch, or excitement in the anticipation of an event planned for the evening. In fact, it was both. For the rest of his colors, he was a very silvery sort of man: his silver hair, gleaming with brilliantine, was brushed back to a smooth surface, and a thin silver mustache, trimmed daily with a scissors, traced his upper lip. Beneath a white wool overcoat, on the lapel of a gray silk suit, he wore a ribbon holding a silver Maltese cross on a blue enamel field, which meant he held the rank of cavaliere in the Order of the Crown of Italy. On the other lapel, the silver medal of the Italian Fascist party; a tipped square with diagonal fasces--a bundle of birch rods tied, with a red cord, to an axe. This symbolized the power of the consuls of the Roman Empire, who had the real rods and axe carried before them, and had the authority to beat with the birch rods, or behead with the axe. Count Amandola looked at his watch, then rolled down the rear window and peered through the rain at a short street, the rue du Gros Caillou, that intersected the rue Augereau. From this point of observation--and he had twice made sure of it earlier that week--he could see the entry of the Hotel Colbert; a rather subtle entry, only the name in gold letters on the glass door, and a spill of light from the lobby that shone on the wet pavement. A rather subtle hotel, the Colbert, quiet, discreet, that catered to les affaires cinq-a-sept; amours conducted between five and seven, those flexible hours of the early evening. But, Amandola thought, a little taste of fame for you tomorrow. The hotel commissionaire, holding a large umbrella, left the entry and headed briskly down the street, toward the rue Saint-Dominique. Once more, Amandola looked at his watch. 7:32, it said. No, he thought, it is 1932 hours. For this occasion, twenty-four-hour time, military time, was obviously the proper form. He was, after all, a major, had taken a commission in 1915, served in the Great War, and had the medals, and seven lavishly tailored uniforms, to prove it. Served with distinction--officially recognized--in the purchasing office of the Ministry of War, in Rome, where he had given orders, maintained discipline, read and signed forms and letters, and made and answered calls on the telephone, his military decorum scrupulous in every way. And so it had remained, since 1927, in his tenure as a senior official in the Pubblica Sicurezza, the department of Public Security of the Ministry of the Interior, set up by Mussolini's chief of national police a year earlier. The work was not so different from his job during the war; the forms, the letters, the telephone, and the maintenance of discipline--his staff sat at attention at their desks, and formality was the rule in all discourse. 1944 hours. Rain drummed steadily on the roof of the Lancia and Amandola pulled his overcoat tighter, against the chill. Outside on the sidewalk, a maid--under her open raincoat a gray-and-white uniform--was pulled along by a dachshund wearing a sweater. As the dog sniffed at the pavement and began to circle, the maid squinted through the window at Amandola. Rude, the Parisians. He did not bother to turn away, simply looked through her, she did not exist. A few minutes later, a black square-bodied taxi pulled up to the entry of the Colbert. The commissionaire hopped out, leaving the door open, as a couple emerged from the lobby; he white-haired, tall and stooped, she younger, wearing a hat with a veil. They stood together under the commissionaire's umbrella, she raised her veil and they kissed passionately--until next Tuesday, my beloved. Then the woman climbed into the taxi, the man tipped the commissionaire, raised his own umbrella, and strode around the corner. 1950 hours. Ecco, Bottini! The chauffeur was watching his side-view mirror. "Il galletto," he said. Yes, the cockerel, so they called him, for he did indeed strut. Heading along the rue Augereau toward the Colbert, he was the classical short man who refused to be short: posture erect, back

stiff, chin high, chest out. Bottini was a Turinese lawyer who had emigrated to Paris in 1935, dissatisfied with the fascist policies of his native country. A dissatisfaction no doubt sharpened by a good public beating and a half a bottle of castor oil, administered by a Blackshirt action squad as a crowd gathered and gawked in silence. Always a liberal, probably a socialist, possibly a secret Communist, Amandola suspected--slippery as eels, these types--Bottini was a friend to the oppressed, and prominent in the friends-to-the-oppressed community. But the problem with il galletto wasn't that he strutted, the problem was that he crowed. Arriving in Paris, he had naturally joined the Giustizia e Liberta--justice and liberty--organization, the largest and most determined group of the antifascist opposition, and then become editor of one of their clandestine newspapers, Liberazione, written in Paris, smuggled into Italy, then printed and covertly distributed. Infamita! This paper kicked like a mule; barbed, witty, knowing, and savage, with not a wisp of respect for Italy's glorious fascismo or Il Duce or any of his achievements. But now, Amandola thought, this galletto was done crowing. As Bottini turned the corner of the rue Augereau, he took off his steel-framed eyeglasses, wiped the rain from the lenses with a large white handkerchief, and put the glasses in a case. Then he entered the hotel. He was precisely on schedule, according to the surveillance reports. On Tuesday evenings, from eight to ten, always in Room 44, he would entertain his mistress, the wife of the French socialist politician LaCroix. LaCroix, who had headed one ministry, then another, in the Popular Front government. LaCroix, who stood beside the Prime Minister, Daladier, in the newspaper photographs. LaCroix, who dined at his club every Tuesday and played bridge until midnight. It was 2015 before a taxi pulled up to the Colbert and Madame LaCroix emerged, and ran with tiny steps into the hotel. Amandola got only a glimpse of her--brick red hair, pointy white nose, a Rubenesque woman, fleshy and abundant. And greatly appetitious, according to the operatives who'd rented Room 46 and eavesdropped on the other side of the wall. Subjects are vocal, and noisy, said one report. Describing, Amandola supposed, every sort of moan and squeal as the two went at their coupling like excited swine. Oh, he knew her sort; she liked her food and she liked her wine and she liked her naked pleasures--any and all of them no doubt, the full deck of naughty playing cards. Libertines. A full-length mirror faced the foot of the large bed in Room 44 and surely they took advantage of it, thrilled to watch themselves thrashing about, thrilled to watch--everything. Now, Amandola thought, one must wait. They had learned it was the lovers' custom to spend a few minutes in conversation before they got busy. So, give them a little time. Amandola's OVRA operatives--OVRA was the name of the secret police, the political police, established by Mussolini in the 1920s--were already inside the hotel, had taken rooms that afternoon, accompanied by prostitutes. Who might well, in time, be found by the police and interrogated, but what could they say? He was bald, he wore a beard, he said his name was Mario. But bald Mario and bearded Mario would be, at that point, long gone across the border, back in Italy. At most, the girls would get their pictures in the newspaper. Madame LaCroix, when the OVRA men burst into the room, would no doubt be indignant, this was, she would assume, some vile trick perpetrated by her serpent of a husband. But she would not assume it for long, and when the revolver appeared, with its long snout of a silencer, it would be too late to scream. Would Bottini? Or would he plead for his life? No, Amandola thought, he would do neither. He would curse them, a vain galletto to the end, and take his medicine. In the temple. Then, the silencer unscrewed, the revolver placed in Bottini's hand. So sad, so dreary, a doomed love affair, a lover's despair. And would the world believe it? The tryst that ended in tragedy? Most would, but some wouldn't, and it was for them that this event had been staged, the ones who would know immediately that this was politics, not passion. Because this was not a quiet disappearance, this was public, and flamboyant, so meant to serve as a warning: We will do anything we want to do, you cannot stop us. The French would be outraged, but then, the French were habitually outraged. Well, let them sputter. It was 2042 when the leader of the OVRA squad left the hotel and crossed to Amandola's side of the rue Augereau. Hands in pockets, head down, he wore a rubber raincoat and a black felt hat, rain dripping off the brim. As he passed the Lancia, he raised his head, revealing a dark, heavy face, a southern face, and made eye contact with Amandola. A brief glance, but sufficient. It's done. 4 December, 1938. The Cafe Europa, in a narrow street near the Gare du Nord, was owned by a Frenchman of Italian descent. A man of fervent and heated opinions, an idealist, he made his back room available to a group of Parisian giellisti, so-called for their membership in the Giustizia e Liberta--known informally by the initials GL, thus giellisti. There were eight of them that morning, called to an emergency meeting. They all wore dark overcoats, sitting around a table in the unlit room, and, except for the one woman, they wore their hats. Because the room was cold and damp, and also, though nobody ever said it out loud, because it was somehow in keeping with the conspiratorial nature of their politics: the antifascist resistance, the Resistenza. They were all more

or less in midlife, emigres from Italy, and members of a certain class--a lawyer from Rome, a medical school professor from Venice, an art historian from Siena, a man who had owned a pharmacy in the same city, the woman formerly an industrial chemist in Milan. And so on--several with eyeglasses, most of them smoking cigarettes, except for the Sienese professor of art history, lately employed as a meter reader for the gas company, who smoked a powerful little cigar. Three of them had brought along a certain morning newspaper, the very vilest and most outrageous of the Parisian tabloids, and a copy lay on the table, folded open to a grainy photograph beneath the headline MURDER/SUICIDE AT LOVERS HOTEL. Bottini, bare-chested, sat propped against a headboard, a sheet pulled up to his waist, eyes open and unseeing, blood on his face. By his side, a shape beneath the sheet, its arms flung wide. The leader of the group, Arturo Salamone, let the newspaper lie open for a time, a silent eulogy. Then, with a sigh, he flipped it closed, folded it in half, and put it by the side of his chair. Salamone was a great bear of a man, with heavy jowls, and thick eyebrows that met at the bridge of his nose. He had been a shipping agent in Genoa, now worked as a bookkeeper at an insurance company. "So then," he said. "Do we accept this?" "I do not," said the lawyer. "Staged." "Do we agree?" The pharmacist cleared his throat and said, "Are we completely sure? That this was, assassination?" "I am," Salamone said. "Bottini had no such brutality in him. They killed him, and his lover--the OVRA, or someone like them. This was ordered by Rome; it was planned, prepared, and executed. And not only did they murder Bottini, they defamed him: 'this is the sort of man, unstable, vicious, who speaks against our noble fascism.' And, of course, there are people who will believe it." "Some will, always, anything," the woman chemist said. "But we shall see what the Italian papers say about it." "They will have to follow the government line," the Venetian professor said. The woman shrugged. "As usual. Still, we have a few friends there, and a simple word or two, alleged or supposedly, can cast a shadow. Nobody just reads the news these days, they decipher it, like a code." "Then how do we counter?" the lawyer said. "Not an eye for an eye." "No," Salamone said. "We are not them. Not yet." "We must expose it," the woman said. "The true story, in Liberazione. And hope the clandestine press, here and in Italy, will follow us. We can't let these people get away with what they've done, we can't let them think they got away with it. And we should say where this monstrosity came from." "Where is that?" the lawyer said. She pointed upward. "The top." The lawyer nodded. "Yes, you're right. Perhaps it could be done as an obituary, in a box outlined in black, a political obituary. It should be strong, very strong--here is a man, a hero, who died for what he believed in, a man who told truths the government could not bear to have revealed." "Will you write it?" Salamone said. "I will do a draft," the lawyer said. "Then we'll see." The professor from Siena said, "Maybe you could end by writing that when Mussolini and his friends are swept away, we will pull down his fucking statue on a horse and raise one to honor Bottini." The lawyer took pen and pad from his pocket and made a note. "What about the family?" the pharmacist said. "Bottini's family." "I will talk to his wife," Salamone said. "And we have a fund, we must help as best we can."From the Hardcover edition.Revue de presseThere are writers who so capture the feel of a particular historical time and place that, once youve read them, its impossible to look back to the period without sensing their presence. Alan Furst, with his novels of wartime Europe, is one of those authors. (Simon Shaw MAIL ON SUNDAY)enjoyably gripping tale of spies and skulduggery (Christina Koning TIMES)