



Into the Lion's Mouth: The True Story of Dusko Popov: World War II Spy, Patriot, and the Real-Life Inspiration for James Bond

Larry Loftis

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It's time the world knew ... there was a REAL James Bond. This narrative nonfiction thriller published by Penguin Random House reveals with hard evidence--for the first time--the man who unquestionably inspired Ian Fleming's iconic character.

A daring MI6 double agent who made Bond look timid ... Classified for decades by Britain's Official Secrets Act ... A spy who saved D-Day and warned of Pearl Harbor ... Plunging himself time and again INTO THE LION'S MOUTH.

If you are a fan of thrillers (this one just happens to be true), WWII military history (especially D-Day and Pearl Harbor), espionage (Popov was an agent for the Abwehr, SD, MI5, MI6, and the FBI)--or just want to know what really happened in CASINO ESTORIL (which Fleming re-created as CASINO ROYALE), this is your book. Yes, Bond fans, the REAL James Bond had more girlfriends, lovers (including the enemy), intrigue, and world travel than Ian Fleming's creation. As Tom Colgan (famously Tom Clancy's editor) said after editing the manuscript, "It's a good thing this is nonfiction because it's too incredible to be a novel."

From Amazon:

On a cool August evening in 1941, a Serbian playboy created a stir at Casino Estoril in Portugal by throwing down an outrageously large baccarat bet to humiliate his opponent. The Serbian was a British double agent, and the money?which he had just stolen from the Germans?belonged to the British. From the sideline, watching with intent interest was none other than Ian Fleming....

The Serbian was Dusko Popov. As a youngster, he was expelled from his London prep school. Years later he would be arrested and banished from Germany for making derogatory statements about the Third Reich. When World War II ensued, the playboy became a spy, eventually serving three dangerous masters: the Abwehr, MI5 and MI6, and the FBI.

On August 10, 1941, the Germans sent Popov to the United States to construct a spy network and gather information on Pearl Harbor. The FBI ignored his German questionnaire, but J. Edgar Hoover succeeded in blowing his cover. While MI5 desperately needed Popov to deceive the Abwehr about the D-Day invasion, they assured him that a return to the German Secret Service Headquarters in Lisbon would result in torture and execution. He went anyway...

Into the Lion's Mouth is a globe-trotting account of a man's entanglement with espionage, murder, assassins, and lovers?including enemy spies and a Hollywood starlet. It is a story of subterfuge and seduction, patriotism, and cold-blooded courage. It is the story of Dusko Popov?the inspiration for James Bond.

Into the Lion's Mouth: The True Story of Dusko Popov: World War II Spy, Patriot, and the Real-Life Inspiration for James Bond Details

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From Reader Review Into the Lion's Mouth: The True Story of Dusko Popov: World War II Spy, Patriot, and the Real-Life Inspiration for James Bond for online ebook

Andrew Wiese says

This is a fun read. Keep focused in the beginning to know who the characters are so you do not have to flip back to refresh their role as the author uses their last names often and there are many characters to keep track of.

There is always "a guy" that makes a bigger impact than what the map shows as to where armies are placed and who holds the advantage in which ocean. Dusko Popov is that guy. And it is just as glamorous as Bond, but perhaps not as falsely action packed.

This guy is the real deal, handling Nazi interrogations, playing both sides for the Allied cause, recruiting and all the while keeping a beautiful girl in tow. The winning side owes this man a lot.

Joseph Hamilton says

I read about this book in Parade magazine and had to read it. The author includes a chart at the back that presents the various pretenders to the claim of being Ian Fleming's inspiration for James Bond. Dusko Popov clearly bested the opposition.

Tom says

Read as a train, so much action.

Difficult point for me was jumping around in time between chapters, and too many names (not the author's fault per se, but sometimes using the first and last name, or other codenames, which makes it difficult to be sure who was who again. If I hadn't read this in 3 days, I'd have forgotten a lot more.)

Neverdust says

Fascinating.

Also, America was apparently The Worst at the spy game/information gathering (no comment) and Hoover was a... thing I will not write here. Be assured, it is all uncomplimentary!

Everything I read about the SOE and the British spies just makes me want to know more. And this was a great story.

Andrew says

Ok

Did not think this book was that great. Not that the subject matter was not interesting, but the telling was tedious-almost a stream of consciousness of one event, letter and\ or incident without any unifying story line. And the James Bond connection was tenuous and a small part of the book(which was not as advertised).

David Benefry says

The James Bond Origin Story

Having appeared in countless movies always embodying the aspects that make him the manliest man amongst all men, Bond seems like a larger-than-life kind of entity that could have only spawned from the wild imagination of the artist in Ian Fleming. In truth, the character was actually based on someone very real: Dusko Popov.

Reality is consistently more surprising than fiction; Bond couldn't hope to hold a candle to Popov's accomplishments. He was so adept at his secretive work that many of his actions, some of which certainly shaped history, have been outrageously-overlooked not only during the last few decades, but even during the period they took place in.

A Life Made for a Novel

To start things off, whenever it comes to a historical book such as this one the first that pops up is the veracity of the information. While every topic has blanks to fill in, in our case I assure you that everything is 100% factual, accurate and thoroughly researched, with there even being 75 pages of notes and sources added for those of us who want to follow up on what we learn. He doesn't use his imagination to stuff the few informational voids he encountered, sticking solely to the historical truth.

With that being said, Popov's life needed no embellishments, being unique and eventful enough to be turned into a work of literature. He was the perfect spy and model for James Bond to be: a womanizer, talented shooter, big spender, seemingly eccentric, and working simultaneously undercover for the FBI, MI5, MI6 as well as the Abwehr (the Third Reich's intelligence agency), pretending to play every side of the fence while truly furthering the Allies' cause.

He undertook countless extremely dangerous missions demanding extreme finesse, intelligence and manipulation, voluntarily jumping from the frying pan into the fire. His ability to inform the Allies and misinform the Axis made Popov a key player in countless strategic operations... had he not deceived the Germans about D-Day, it might have taken a wholly different route. In short, Dusko's life story was one that demanded immeasurable courage and was filled with espionage, intrigue, assassins, lovers and eternal enemies.

A Story Worth Knowing

While it is true that the best spies remain secret, Popov's work has still gone criminally-unacclaimed. Many

of his exploits came to light over numerous years, overshadowed by the bigger historical figures of those days.

What Larry Loftis does here is quite necessary, educating us about one of the most important and least recognized men in those times. Thankfully, he opted to do it through a thrilling narration, a course of action taken by more and more historical authors. He took his time in crafting the perfect prose, making all the sentences blend together and flow seamlessly with the help of precise and simple vocabulary. There is never a dull moment, nor are we treated to useless details and descriptions; the focus is largely directed towards advancing Dusko's incredible story.

Ultimately, you'll learn more from this than any old boring history book. Loftis knows exactly how to keep your attention, withholding the right information, nearly always keeping us on the edges of our seats and wondering how our protagonist will deal with the new impossible challenges before him. And the best part is that none of it is fictional, a fact one must keep reminding him or herself.

Some Final Words

All in all, this is one book that should sit on the shelves of all those who are even slightly interested in the topic of WWII espionage. To see Popov as the mere inspiration for a fictional character doesn't do him justice; he was very much his own unique person that influenced countless lives and even entire countries from the shadows, constantly putting himself in harm's way to do what he believed to be right. This is without a doubt one of the best (and very few) books written about this person, making it arguably the best place to become acquainted with the man who can claim in good conscience the title of world's best spy.

If you are curious to know more about the author and his book you can read the short interview we've conducted with him here: <https://bookwormex.com/larry-loftis-i...>

Kay says

Intriguing, but not in the way intended

What a wasted opportunity. So much research went into this book, yet the resulting narrative was disjointed, muddled, and (for me) at times downright annoying.

Listen, I understand that writing an account of such complex events – which enmeshed scores of people (many of whom went by several names), spanned several continents, and involved multiple warring nations as well as “neutral” nations such as Spain and Portugal and their diplomatic and intelligence services – must have been an extremely challenging task. Not to mention that super-spy Dusko Popov, the subject of Larry Loftis’ book, was a complex person.

Yet the task of the author is to lighten the load for his readers, not add to it. Details should complement the narrative, not bog it down. While reading *Into the Lion’s Mouth* I was reminded of a comment once made by Hugh Trevor-Roper in regard to another book, “He piles on the illustrative (or irrelevant) detail. He cannot leave anything out. Every person mentioned must have a potted biography. Every place must be equipped with atmosphere, furniture, associations.”

Thus, in Loftis' account, the reader learns far more than she ever needed to about all the hotels and resorts Popov frequented, what amount of cash he was given (and from whom and when and how), the multiple ways he was to formulate invisible ink for secret missives, what code words he was to use with his handlers and each of his contacts, and all the various "systems of codes and clandestine meetings" detailed in loving but often useless detail.

Such details were supposed to build atmosphere, not to mention buttress Loftis' claim that Popov was *the* model for Ian Fleming's James Bond. However, "this passion for inessential detail" (Trevor Roper again) irritated rather than intrigued me.

But that was only one problem.

Just as confounding was the author's strange habit of referring to people by both their first and last names, alternatively from sentence to sentence. Then in some cases he also referred to code names (often *two* code names, one employed by Allied and the other by Axis spymasters), as well as military rank (e.g. "the major").

Perhaps this would not have been such a problem were there not, as mentioned before, so many people involved. Prefacing the first chapter is a rather daunting list of *Dramatis Personnae* -- some sixty key players. But wait, double that already formidable challenge by using first, last, and code names. Add all the various wartime acronyms (BSC, MI6, ONI, MID, SD, OKW, SOE, etc) into the mix and even a reader with considerable background might wish to throw in the towel.

This first-last-&-code-name habit produces some almost comically befuddling passages. In truth, I began to dog-ear pages with the most egregious examples and soon became something of an aficionado. My personal favorite was a reference pretty much out of the blue to "Erwin." That's Rommel, if you please. Priceless!

"J. Edgar" for Hoover, "Ewan" for Montagu, and "J.C." for Masterman are a few of the more entertaining examples of gratuitous first-name familiarity. I got the biggest kick out of the "du"-ing of figures in the German high command, however. Alas, never a reference to an "Adolf." I suppose that would be going a bit too far.

At another point I did a double take, uncertain if the "Ian" just mentioned was Fleming or Popov's primary handler, Ian Wilson. (It was the latter.) Still, it gave rise to some entertaining speculation on my part. Did the author feel some psychological closeness to these spies and handlers which led to his using their first names? Alternatively, did he perhaps hope to instill in the reader some sense of intimacy with them? Or did he simply have an aversion to personal pronouns? Perhaps some basic confusion in matters of pronoun reference led him to cast about for alternative methods? Such speculations provided diversion, I'll admit, as I slogged my way determinedly through the book.

Add to this confusion of names some confusions of time and place. Pay, as I might, very close attention to the account, I found myself backtracking frequently for clarification. For a time I thought perhaps I was being a careless reader, but after berating myself for this a half dozen times or so, I began to analyze *where and why* I'd gotten confused. And you know what? There were strange jumps in time and place. In the midst of a day-by-day account of Popov's moves, for example, I found myself in Paris in one paragraph then – voilà! – in London in the next. Magic carpet time!

Then there were the chapter-ending false "cliffhanger" gambits that grew really old, really fast. Many chapters were given racy and mysterious headings such as "Turn Around Slowly." And, at the end of that

particular chapter, Popov (who feared his double-agent status had been revealed) would be standing looking out a window when he hears those very words.

Only it would turn out that he wasn't being apprehended. No, his spy handler had just entered the room with a pet monkey on his shoulder and was cautioning Popov not to move quickly as it might frighten the pet.

This sort of faux climax occurs multiple times and, as I said, soon becomes a bit ridiculous, as do some other stylistic quirks which are no doubt meant to add to the atmosphere of danger and intrigue but come off, more often than not, rather clumsily.

Also baffling are many of the photos interspersed throughout the text. Now, I really do appreciate good photos accompanying biographies and histories. I recently read a book by Candice Millard, *Hero of the Empire*, for example, that included some photographs of young Winston Churchill, photos that made me realize just how young (and *thin!*) the great man had been when he served as a correspondent during the Boer War.

Some of the photos included in *In the Lion's Mouth* are, regrettably, not of a similar caliber. There are multiple photos of the exteriors of hotels and casinos that Popov frequented, for example: some stately-looking buildings set among other stately-looking buildings. I count about a half dozen of these, and they are innocuous enough, but what was the point?

What is harder to fathom, though, is the inclusion of many blurry (sometimes bordering on illegible) reproductions of hand-written notes, reports, charts, questionnaires, micro-dot enlargements, and other spy-related material. More often than not, the author has already quoted anything relevant from these documents, and usually at great length. Squint at them as I might, I couldn't really glean much other than that, yes, these are spy documents all right. There were a lot of them.

One final bafflement I have dubbed "The Competition." That is to say, the strange need to come up with THE "real-life inspiration for James Bond," not to mention decide who was THE "greatest WWII double agent." Why is this necessary? What's the point?

It's fairly clear that Popov was the inspiration for the famous casino scene in *Casino Royale* and that he possessed many of the attributes of Fleming's Bond. But why the fixation on claiming Bond was based primarily on Popov? It's fairly common knowledge that Fleming gathered inspiration, magpie-like, from multiple sources. But here, in Appendix 3 of Loftis' book, is a painstaking compilation of charts and commentary on why Popov above all should be considered the "one man 'rumored to have inspired the character of James Bond.'"

Of course, tying Dusko Popov to James Bond is a nice marketing strategy, but be forewarned that other than in one chapter and the appendix mentioned above, there's scant material here for Bond fans.

So, why did I finish this book? Well, partly because "hope springs eternal" and I kept thinking that it would improve. There were some intriguing episodes, particularly recounting Popov's run-ins with his arch nemesis, J. Edgar... er, Hoover. I've read a number of accounts of the Double-Cross system, Operation Fortitude, and other WWII spies, so the narrative often provided that warm glow of entering familiar territory.

But mostly I found this a curious example of how, even with the best intentions and feedback from many peers and helpers, an author can lose sight of his readers' needs and probable reactions. That was intriguing,

in an unintended way.

The Real Book Spy says

See this review and more at www.TheRealBookSpy.com

Many don't know this, I certainly didn't before reading Larry Loftis' new book, but James Bond--the character created and made famous by Ian Fleming--is based on a real person. Dusko Popov is the real 007 (though he was never given that code name), and the true story of his life and career as a double agent is far more compelling than anything Fleming, or anyone else for that matter, could ever dream up.

I don't read many biographies, which I freely admit, because most of the time I find fiction to be far more entertaining than real life. A friend of mine, who was in the military and is now a police officer, often tells me how boring those jobs are in real life compared to when they are fictionalized for entertainment. "It's not like it is in the movies," he tells me--and this is coming from a guy who works on a full-time SWAT team.

A few weeks ago I got an advance copy of Loftis' book and didn't know what to think, so I started it without any expectations and was completely and utterly blown away. *Into The Lion's Mouth* is one of the most fascinating things I've ever read, period. Larry Loftis wrote a thriller novel--which just so happens to be a completely true and accurate depiction of the life of Dusko Popov.

If you love historical fiction, thrillers, or spy novels, *Into The Lion's Mouth* is one of the true must-read books of the summer.

The Story

"He (Popov) had steel within, the ruthlessness and the cold-blooded courage that enabled him to go back to the German Secret Service Headquarters in Lisbon and Madrid time and time again, when it was likely that he was blown; it was like putting his head into the lion's moth."

Larry Loftis opens his book with this chilling quote from Lieutenant-Commander Ewen Montagu, who served on the British Double-Cross Committee. It perfectly sums up the kind of nerves Popov had, allowing him to live a life of double-crossing without so much as batting an eye--and kill without a conscience.

Within a few sentences of the preface, Loftis makes it clear that his book is different than any biography you've ever read. His writing style, pacing, and structure make *Into The Lion's Mouth* feel like a Vince Flynn or Daniel Silva novel. That is, until you realize the story unfolding is actually true, which takes this incredible tale to the next level for readers. It's unreal how thrilling this real story is!

Early on, we learn that Dusan "Dusko" Miladoroff Popov, born in 1912, was the second of three sons, and grandson to a wealthy banker and industrialist. Without question, it's easy to see where Fleming took inspiration from Dusko, who was handsome, a fast talker, charismatic, charming, a womanizer, and well educated with expensive taste. Those are the Bond-like qualities that made him successful in fooling and deceiving everyone around him, and why he's such an interesting man to study and read about.

Dusko was a natural when it came to embodying the traits that make a spy successful. That's another area

that Loftis talks about, the difference between a soldier--who serves with patriotism and courage--versus a spy, who operates in the shadows and thrives on spewing deceit and lies.

Soldiers serve with bravery, often channeling their love for country in regard to their service. Spies, on the other hand (at least back then), operated much like criminals, but with a cause and a purpose.

The problem is that sometimes a spy's cause and purpose had nothing to do with his country, but with other motives--which can be bought or manipulated. Such was the case for Popov, who pretended to give German officials sensitive British military information, while in reality he was working as a double agent for Britain's MI6 during World War II.

During his career, Popov was vital to the success of D-Day, and was nearly successful in tipping off the FBI about the impending attack on Pearl Harbor. But that's just the tip of the iceberg, and Loftis covers all of it in gripping fashion.

The magic of Loftis' writing is in the way he tells the story. He doesn't just tell you where Popov was first confronted by his German controller, he paints a scene and then drops you smack dab in the middle of it. The tension is palpable, and I found myself genuinely nervous at times while reading along.

If nothing else, I learned very quickly that I most definitely do not have what it takes to be a spy or a double agent. Heck, my heart was pumping hard enough waiting for Popov to be discovered that it doesn't seem possible to me that any man could actually live his life under such stress and uncertainty. Yet it happens, and Popov did it with flair and expertise for several years like it was nothing.

Why I loved it

Larry Loftis hit the ball out of the park with this book. The story of Popov's life is already incredible, but some people have the natural ability to make things more interesting with their delivery--and Loftis is one of them. Never before has the nonfiction account of someone gripped me the way *Into The Lion's Mouth* did.

Why you should read it

If you love spy novels and political thrillers, then you've got to read this book! Popov is real, and his story is as much fun to read about as any adventure following Mitch Rapp, Gabriel Allon or Cotton Malone.

I actually finished this book a couple weeks ago, but waited to write the review until I compared *Into The Lion's Mouth* to another biography written about Dusko Popov. In the end, there is no comparison--Larry Loftis smokes the competition.

Joshua Hood says

Into the Lion's Mouth is the remarkable story of Dusko Popov. Part spy, part patriot, his exploits inspired the creation of James Bond. The book packs the punch of a cyanide capsule. Larry Loftis's rich prose leaves you paralyzed, physically unable to tear yourself from a narrative so vivid that you actually smell the cigarette smoke hovering above the baccarat tables. And feel the weight of the Luger hanging beneath your arm.

Joshua Hood

Kristen says

Into the Lion's Mouth: The True Story of Dusko Popov: World War II Spy, Patriot, and Real-Life Inspiration for James Bond read more like a thriller than a biography. Loftis draws you into this world of intrigue. While sometimes at the beginning it was a little hard to keep track of all the players, there was always plenty of action. I had read a couple of books about Soviet-English double agent Kim Philby, but didn't really know anything about Popov's doubling for England against Germany. One of the most interesting interesting things to me, was the warning that Popov delivered to the US about Japan's interest in Pearl Harbor. A clearer warning to the US could not have been delivered, but J Edgar Hoover buried it in the FBI files as he tried to protect the Bureau's turf.

I highly recommend this book.

Full disclosure: I won a free copy in a Goodreads Giveaway in exchange for an honest review.

Bella says

The real-life inspiration for James Bond proves to be every bit as riveting as any of Ian Fleming's creations. Larry Loftis' tale of true espionage, assassination and seduction is one of the most remarkable books we've read all year.

Born a Serb, Popov's fingerprints are all over 20th century history in this who's who of spycraft. A master of five languages and seducer of women, Popov was schooled in London before making his way to Germany, where he was initially exiled by the Third Reich before his eventual re-recruitment into the Nazi spy machine. Months before Pearl Harbor, he Abwehr sent Popov there to gather intelligence. Three years later, he fed disinformation back to Germany about the upcoming allied invasion of Europe. Conveying false information about preparation, approach and leadership of the upcoming attack, Popov may be an unheralded hero of the D-Day invasion at Normandy.

Check out the rest of my review at BestThrillers.com

Jack Lugo says

A fascinating book for Bond fans and historians alike. Loftis explores the real life story of Dusko Popov and makes an very strong case for why Fleming drew from Popov for Casino Royale. We also get a real close look at the vital role espionage played during WWII and some surprising revelations ensue. Popov lived the life of a double agent and he did it in a way that defies some of our real world pre-conceptions of spies. He was every bit the lady's man and enjoyed luxury accomodations almost every where he went. He deceived the Germans with misinformation and proved to be one of the Allies best assets during the war. Loftis meticulously goes into detail about the Bond connection pinpointing specific times where Fleming and Popov were likely to have been at the same place notably featuring the Casino at Estoril, where Fleming had famously said he based much of Casino Royale on an encounter there with Nazi spies. Find out what the reality of that encounter was and find out much more about Popov's life of intrigue and mystery in Larry

Loftis's excellent book.

Jerome says

An engaging, readable and dramatic history of Popov's incredible career, told in a novelistic style.

Loftis covers Popov's role in such well-known episodes as the Pearl Harbor intelligence failures, the TRICYCLE network, the double-cross system and drawing German attention away from Normandy during the planned invasion. He also does a fine job conveying Popov's charisma, charm and womanizing habits. Loftis also discusses the qualities that separate soldiers from spies, and how these applied to Popov. He covers Popov's use of deceit, manipulation, and his mixed motives, as well as the various assassination plots he managed to dodge. He also does a good job explaining the problems in relying on Popov's memoir.

As the title suggests, Loftis argues that Popov served as the inspiration for Fleming's Bond. His evidence for this seems well-documented but when you add it all up it does seem rather circumstantial. Also, Loftis tends to refer to Popov by his first name, last name, and codenames, even in the course of a single paragraph. Loftis includes a helpful list of figures that come up in the narrative, but the way the narrative itself is written forces the reader to refer to the list quite often. And at one point the HMS *Queen Elizabeth* is called a submarine.

An intriguing and well-researched work, both thrilling and at times humorous.

Drew Zagorski says

For any fan of history, biography, and, of course, James Bond, this is a must read. Loftis presents the story of Dusko Popov, Ian Fleming's model for the character of James Bond. As you read this story, you'll feel as if you are right in the middle of a Bond thriller... except everything here actually happened. I'd heard snippets of the Popov story from other WWII books I'd read, so was aware of who he was and his relationship to Ian Fleming. But that's all that I'd had on him - snippets. This book tells his full story. Loftis' narrative, as mentioned, reads like a Bond novel so you'll never be bogged down and the pace will keep you turning the page. Maybe more interesting than his exploits in WWII is the post-war chapter of his life. This one was well worth the read!

Ctgt says

Fairly pedestrian recount of the life of double agent Dusko Popov who operated throughout the European theater during World War II. The most fascinating part was the revelation that several months prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Popov gave the FBI the questionnaire with information the Nazis wanted him to investigate. Included in this document were questions about the layout, makeup, etc. of the Pearl Harbor base. Even though there was no date involved, the interest of the Axis powers was obvious but Hoover never forwarded a complete copy of the questionnaire to Roosevelt.

