

**Following the Traces of a Hero: An Overview of the book
Alexander Georgiades the Spymaster That Ended WWII.
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An Overview by Photini Tomai, the author

Many of us have heard stories from our parents, who experienced the events of Second World War first-hand. But most of them are no longer with us. It is natural then to wonder what future generations, our children and grandchildren will learn in the classroom about what caused the bloodiest war in human history of Europe and how it was won?

There are many untold stories of ordinary people who without expectation of personal benefit and at the risk to their jobs, personal freedom, and even their lives became great heroes fighting in the battlefield or in clandestine missions against Nazism. One of them was Captain Alexander Martin Georgiades. Son of a teacher, Georgiades was born in the island of Karpathos, but immigrated in 1916 to the US and lived in Pittsburgh where he studied electrical engineering at the Carnegie Institute. His untold story was almost unknown and only revealed very recently, in a book I published a few years ago with the subtitle "A spymaster that ended WWII." Why? Because Georgiades's mission as a Secret Intelligence (SI) officer was to pave the way for Allied sabotage against Axis in order to stop the transportation of the raw material supplies from Turkey to Berlin that fueled Hitler's war machine. And he accomplished this dangerous mission successfully almost single-handed. His missions were classified for a long time and his role became controversial after the war.

Georgiades joined the OSS in 1942. Without his ingenuity and bravery, defying fear and risking his life in a series of dangerous missions against advanced enemy positions, there would have been no-good end to the mission by the team of another Greek-

American OSS officer of the Special Operations (SO), James Kellis who in 1944 blew up the bridges at Svilengrad (Bulgaria, ally of Axis) and Alexandroupolis (occupied Greece), two strategic points from which vital supplies passed from Turkey to Berlin.

After intensive training at camps in Florida and Sioux Falls in South Dakota, Georgiades equipped with a diplomatic passport issued by the Greek government-in exile in Cairo, was accredited in the Greek consulate in Edirne. Using his official status and the Turkish city as his base and other border towns with Greece, he was extremely active as a secret intelligence officer with the code-name "Gander" and prepared the ground for acts of sabotage as part of an Allied operation code-named "*Noah's Ark*." His activity impressed not only the father of the CIA, then director of the OSS and personal friend of President Roosevelt, General William Donovan, (known as "Wild Bill)," but even the American President himself, especially after Georgiades exposed "Dogwood", a network of Nazi double agents.

Admired for his bravery by Greek locals who used to call him "Alecoss, the American," at the same time he was scorned by British Intelligence because of his frequent and comprehensive reports to the American government which flagged and denounced the factious role the British played for months in the Balkan region. It is a fact that during that period President Roosevelt's policy was diametrically opposed to that of the British. For the Americans, the war itself was top priority, whereas the British and Churchill put greater weight on postwar political considerations. With Roosevelt's unquestioning trust, Donovan's role had a catalytic effect at that time. Actually, it was Donovan who through the Allied Headquarters in Cairo instructed Georgiades to join forces with ELAS, the leftist army. Later, when Georgiades was accused of being pro-communist, Donovan was again the one who defended him. In fact, Donovan often said to his interlocutors, that he would not refuse placing even Stalin himself on the OSS payroll, if by doing so, he could secure his participation in Hitler's defeat.

Georgiades was awarded the Bronze Star and the Legion of Merit of the American Army for his courageous service and meritorious conduct during the war. His refusal to work for the CIA after the war, and because of his prior cooperation with the Greek guerillas based on the orders he received from Cairo, he was placed in the eye of a storm in McCarthy's America. As a result, he suffered many psychological and other persecutions. His story reminds us of what Aeschylus, the classical Greek tragic dramatist, once wrote "*In war, truth is the first casualty*," and it is true that many things occurred during the war that were later presented in a completely skewed fashion.

His memory was redressed a few decades later. Until his death he liked to repeat to his enemies that he was blessed by God to have two homelands which he loved equally, Greece and America. "*The first brought me life, and the second breathed new life into me*" he used to say. Recently he was honored as a WWII veteran by the OXI Foundation in Washington D.C. The book brings the story of this courageous Greek American spy into the public domain for the first time.

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