

3318 Cattaraugus Ave.
Culver City, Calif.
August 24, '50

Dear General Smith;

I thought this article from the October 1947 Readers Digest might be interesting to you in your new job. Just happened to run across it today.

Best wishes for your success in building a viable Intelligence.

Hal Hovey

His OSS helped shorten the last war; now he's crusading for something like it to help prevent another

Our Wartime Spymaster Carries On

The Fascinating Story of "Wild Bill" Donovan

By Frederic Sondern, Jr.

"WHEN in serious trouble," said Franklin D. Roosevelt to a White House aide soon after Pearl Harbor, "it's a good idea to send for Bill Donovan." And the President, although William J. ("Wild Bill") Donovan had been an outspoken anti-New Dealer and his bitter political foe for years, reached for a phone.



intelligence and sabotage network, the Office of Strategic Services, was unquestionably a vital factor in our beating the Axis as quickly as we did. The intricate and melodramatic intrigue with the French which paved the way for our landings in North Africa, the preparations for General Alexander Patch's relatively inexpensive landing in

Government leaders, legislators, heads of industries, generals and others with heavy responsibilities have long felt that way about the soft-spoken, gray-haired lawyer, soldier and statesman who in comparative anonymity has played and is still playing so vital a part in the country's destiny.

During the recent conflict, Donovan became one of the greatest spymasters of all time. His fabulous

southern France, the surrender of the German army in Italy — these were projects of colossal impact, hatched and perfected in Washington by the imaginative man whose character so belies his nickname.

Donovan, all through the war, had agents on the top levels of the German General Staff, the Gestapo and the German Foreign Office. "To Donovan," a British intelligence chief once told me, "nothing is im-

possible. He doesn't seem to know the meaning of the word."

Two years ago an executive order from President Truman dissolved the OSS. Most of its thousands of carefully picked experts went back to their peacetime jobs. Donovan himself returned to his comfortable senior partnership in the large and prosperous Wall Street law firm of Donovan, Leisure, Newton, Lumbard and Irvine. Unhappily, he saw his nucleus of a central intelligence agency, which offered the most comprehensive existing facilities for keeping the President and his Cabinet accurately informed on world affairs, smashed and replaced by a Central Intelligence Group under a National Intelligence Authority. Central largely in name, the Group was a loosely knit combine of the State, War and Navy departments which grudgingly chipped in their intelligence facilities while perpetuating the kind of compartmentation and interdepartmental strife which contributed so largely to the disaster of Pearl Harbor. Without clear-cut directions as to the jobs to be done, without continuity at the top — there have been two admirals and one general at its head in two years — our intelligence system is almost back to where it was in 1939.

Donovan has had to begin his long crusade all over again. Every week or so he goes to Washington, tries to make Congressional leaders see that we are courting disaster. We are the mightiest nation in the world, he says in effect, but also the most vul-

nerable. Our only present hope for security in this atomic era is to know the plans of Moscow, Madrid, Chungking, Paris and the others as soon as they are made. With that knowledge we can prevent war. But to have it we need the finest intelligence service ever devised. That has been, and is, Donovan's dream and lifework, to which he has unsparingly sacrificed both time and money. Its origin goes back to World War I.

At 35, Colonel Bill Donovan came out of the first World War one of the most respected men in the AEF. He had won all three of the Army's highest decorations — the Congressional Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross and the Distinguished Service Medal. With Father Francis Duffy, famed Catholic chaplain, Donovan made the "Fighting 69th" the toughest regiment of the formidable Rainbow Division, which spearheaded our forces through some of the worst battles of the war.

"His men would have cheerfully gone to hell with him," Father Duffy once said. "And as a priest, I mean what I say." It was typical of "Wild Bill" to stand like a rock in the face of heavy enemy fire and yell to his men, "They can't hit me, so they can't hit you either. Let's go!" Donovan won his Congressional Medal near the French village of Landres, when he stayed in the front line after being seriously wounded, and had himself carried round on a stretcher while he reorganized his shattered command.

Donovan was no professional soldier. Born in a modest home in Buffalo, N. Y., he had worked his way through Columbia Law School, returned to Buffalo to practice, and joined the National Guard. On our entry into World War I he became Assistant Chief of Staff of the 27th National Guard Division, and later, when the Rainbow Division was formed, he was given a battalion of the "Fighting 69th," which regiment he was later promoted to command.

Donovan believed in making his soldiers as tough as possible by violent cross-country exercise and harrowing obstacle racing, which he always led himself. Once, after a particularly exhausting practice march in France, he pointed to a nearby hill. "Now we run to the top of that," he snapped. "Good Lord," came a plaintive voice from the rear of the column. "We're not that wild, Bill." "Wild Bill" stuck. Professional soldiers with Donovan were inclined to sneer at the care with which he organized his intelligence section, his frequent raids into German territory, his meticulous interrogation of prisoners. But they had to admit that he seemed to have an extraordinary habit of knowing what the Germans were going to do, where and when.

Europe fascinated and disturbed Donovan, and he felt that World War I was only a prelude to more serious troubles. Home after 21 months of service, he set out to learn as much about the Continent

as he could. He has always been an omnivorous reader. "Donovan's high-speed brain," a close friend once said, "puts in more working time than three normal ones."

The more Donovan read in the early '20's, the more convinced he became that there would be a second world war. He started making plans and filing them away in his card-index mind, for future reference.

Meanwhile, his rise at the bar was rapid. In 1922, as U. S. Attorney for the Western District of New York, he cracked a large and well-organized narcotics ring, and two years later became Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice. Returning to private practice in 1929, he found some of our largest corporations beating a path to his door.

Donovan's courtroom manner is quietly impressive. He prepares a case with the infinite care that he gave his battle plans as a soldier. When he defended a large cement concern against federal antitrust prosecution, the Government experts admitted that Donovan knew almost as much about the cement business as they did. Whether in a Congressional hearing or before the U. S. Supreme Court, he has never been known to be flustered or lose his temper. He speaks in a low but powerful voice, without apparent histrionics, but with an air of absolute authority.

Despite the pressure of his large practice and his political activities — he was one of Herbert Hoover's prin-

principal advisers in 1928, and ran for governor of New York on the Republican ticket in 1932 — developments in Europe plagued Donovan. When Mussolini invaded Ethiopia, he wanted to investigate for himself. His friends in the State Department told him the Duce would not permit him to visit Marshal Badoglio's headquarters. Donovan went to Mussolini anyway. The dictator was very stiff at first. "Your Excellency," said Donovan, "if your troops are no better than they were in the last war, then this Ethiopian conflict is only a small colonial affair. But if you, with your genius, have recreated the Sixth or Tenth Legion of Julius Caesar, then the balance of world politics may be changed." The Duce drew himself up. "You'll see for yourself," he beamed. "I'll send you there." Donovan returned to Washington from Ethiopia with not only invaluable information about the strength and equipment of the Italian army and navy but also a very accurate idea of Mussolini's plans for the Mediterranean area.

When the Franco revolution broke out in Spain, Donovan again went to see for himself. His practiced military eye noticed, among other things, a remarkable new type of field gun, manned by Germans. He watched it fire a few fast bursts at ground troops, then swing up quickly to shoot down a Loyalist plane. It was the now famous German "88," which proved so lethally effective all through World War II. After a few weeks of careful observation, Dono-

van was convinced that the German General Staff was methodically trying out a whole arsenal of new weapons in Spain. There was no doubt in his mind that a war was in the making — an entirely new kind of war.

Washington was only mildly interested. The Army's ordnance department, commenting on the gun which the Colonel had seen, said no such gun existed or could possibly be practicable.

But what worried Donovan most was the fact that we had no system of watching and analyzing the developments in Europe. Except for their own ingenuity and capacity for observation, our military attachés had virtually no intelligence facilities. Donovan tried again and again to warn the Administration that we were sticking our heads in the sand. Finally his chance came.

Early in 1940, President Roosevelt was desperate for an accurate estimate of German intentions, and whether the British were going to be able to hold out against the blitz. Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox suggested Donovan as a special Presidential agent.

And so, in July of that grim year, as the Battle of Britain was about to enter its most decisive phase, Donovan boarded the Lisbon Clipper on a "business trip" to London. He visited powerful British friends, who knew him from World War I and trusted him implicitly. They showed him their radar network, the new Spitfires, the coastal defenses which could turn every vulnerable beach-

head on the island into an inferno of blazing oil, and other devices known only to the inner circle of the British high command. Even many of the sacrosanct secrets of their intelligence system on the Continent, the plans for resistance in France, and the techniques of Commando warfare were revealed to him. Donovan went back to Washington with the conclusion that England would hold.

There was black pessimism in the White House when he arrived: the Army and the State Department were sure the Luftwaffe would smash the British defenses. The Colonel was quietly confident. As the weeks went by, the British stopped Göring's attack — and FDR's confidence in Donovan grew steadily. The back door of the White House was opened to him, and he took full advantage of it.

Donovan's plans for "irregular warfare" — propaganda, sabotage, underground resistance — especially caught the President's imagination. Above all, the Colonel explained, it would be necessary to know *everything* about the war potentialities of every country which might become involved in the conflict. That would take a centralized, powerful intelligence agency capable of making a complete picture of any situation anywhere in the world when the President needed it. Roosevelt agreed, but felt the time was not politically ripe for such an organization. Congress would not vote the money.

In December 1940 the President sent Donovan on another mission.

He traveled for three months — to Gibraltar, Malta, the Balkans, Egypt, Turkey, Spain, Portugal, talking and listening to the People Who Knew, and watching the fighting. The might of the Axis was expanding rapidly. If we were to save ourselves from it, Donovan reported to FDR, we would have to prepare to fight it with its own underhanded weapons. Convinced of the urgent need, in July 1941 the President created the Office of the Coördinator of Information, and Donovan went to work on the biggest and most intricate intelligence job ever undertaken.

From that day until the end of the war, "Wild Bill" rarely worked less than 18 hours a day. Sometimes he would have ideas at two or three in the morning and suddenly send for a secretary to take dictation. At eight he would be at his desk again, pink-cheeked and energetic as usual. One of the nightmares of Donovan's secretariat was the word that he had decided to "go and see for himself." Any one of his associates might be yanked out of bed in the middle of the night and given only a few hours to prepare for a trip to London or Cairo.

Within a few months Donovan had hired the most extraordinary assortment of brains ever assembled in a Government agency. The cream of the academic world came to Washington to work for him: James Baxter, president of Williams College, Professors William Langer and Edward Mason of Harvard, Professors Wilmarth Lewis and Sherman

Kent of Yale, and many more who could have made up a superb university faculty. For his administrators he collected an equally extraordinary group of business heavyweights—Junius and Harry Morgan, bankers; Atherton Richards of the Hawaiian Pineapple Company; Elmo Roper, the *Fortune* survey director; and a host of others, ranging from socialite playboys to second-story workers with police records.

In June 1942 Donovan suggested to FDR that the ambiguous Office of the Coördinator of Information should be changed to the Office of Strategic Services and placed under the jurisdiction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He wanted to mesh the organization more closely in the military effort and obtain broader powers to organize and expand clandestine intelligence and sabotage activities.

In the Army's Military Intelligence Division and in the Office of Naval Intelligence, as soon as their chiefs found out what Donovan was up to, it became popular to call him "the crazy man" and the "amateur competitor." "Donovan's professors" became the butt of Washington's interdepartmental jokes and gossip. OSS was referred to as "Oh So Social" and "Oh So Silly."

Donovan, however, was undisturbed. He was fighting a new kind of war, and he approached it with a completely open mind. "Let's give it a try" was one of his favorite expressions. Once, at a grueling OSS staff meeting plotting future action against Germany, an irritated young

Army officer flared: "Good Lord, why don't we just drop into Berlin and assassinate Hitler? It would all be much simpler." Donovan raised his eyebrows and looked fixedly at the young man for a moment. "Well," he said finally, "why don't we?" He was stopped from trying only by a report from Allen Dulles, his chief agent in Switzerland, that some German officers were going to try it themselves.

Donovan's influence on his men was enormous. Unlike most brass, he was always available and easy to talk to. He would keep colonels waiting while he consulted with a sergeant who had a bright idea. A flustered aide, on one occasion, was trying to get him to an important meeting at the War Department. But the General was talking to a nondescript little man with a foreign accent. "Never mind, my boy," said "Wild Bill" to the aide a half hour later. "That man is going to jump into Berlin pretty soon. The meeting isn't going anywhere; it can wait."

Donovan's enthusiasm, spontaneity and love of the different was quickly communicated all the way down the line. "He made me feel," said one agent whom Donovan sent on a particularly dangerous mission into the Balkans, "as though it was all going to be perfectly simple. He talked to me quietly for half an hour, and I walked out of his office convinced that I could do the job." That is Donovan's way.

The sabotage and resistance work of the OSS, the officers parachuted

to the Maquis in France, and the damage they inflicted on the Germans have been widely publicized. Relatively little attention has been given to Donovan's intelligence system, which he rightly considered even more important than the more lurid terrorists. It was two-pronged. Well-trained agents were infiltrated into Germany, occupied France and northern Italy by methods which cannot be revealed in detail even today. In the six months before Hitler's collapse, 200 of Donovan's agents, equipped with radios, had penetrated German-occupied territory and were sending out information on troop movements, bomb hits, morale. Combining the findings of OSS men in the field with those of the "carpet-sweepers," the expert researchers in Washington, Donovan's men were able to work out the strength of the German army, penetrate the scrupulously guarded secret of the Nazi tank production figures, and keep track of the Reich's food situation. Their accuracy amazed even themselves when, after Hitler's collapse, they finally saw the actual German figures.

In a freight-rate schedule which an OSS operative had sent to Washington, one of Donovan's watchers noticed an unfamiliar Austrian village quoted for oil shipment prices, and suspected rightly that a new refinery had been put up there. Although beautifully camouflaged, it was promptly bombed out of existence by the Eighth Air Force.

"You can find out anything you

want to know about anybody in the world," Donovan once announced at a staff meeting, "if you really want to." Within a year after the creation of OSS, "Donovan's professors" were paying dividends both in lives and success. Generals in the field began calling on local OSS detachments for help, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff paid careful attention to Donovan's "estimate of the situation." The OSS grew into an organization of 12,000 people. By the time the war ended, it had spent \$135,000,000. No one who knew the part it played in our victory felt that the money had been wasted. Donovan had created, out of nothing, an organization without equal in the world. But he had to fight for it every inch of a long, wasteful way. If there is ever need for a future OSS there will not be time for such a protracted struggle.

So "Wild Bill" is fighting again. He wants an independent intelligence agency, with a civilian at its head, which can coordinate the information of all other Government agencies, supplement that with its own findings, and present the complete picture to the President and the Cabinet for speedy attention. Whether we like it or not, we have many enemies in the world today, says Donovan. We must know exactly what they are doing. That makes as much sense now as it did in 1940. "Wild Bill" has recently returned from one of his "investigation trips" to Europe. It behooves us to heed what he has to say.

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from

1 September 1950

Mr. Hal Noway
3318 Cottarrungas Avenue
Calver City, California



Dear Mr. Noway:

Thanks sincerely for your kind letter with its good wishes and congratulations on my new appointment and also for the very interesting article.

It was very thoughtful of you to send it to me and I greatly appreciate it.

With kindest regards,

Sincerely,

W. B. [unclear]
29 HJM