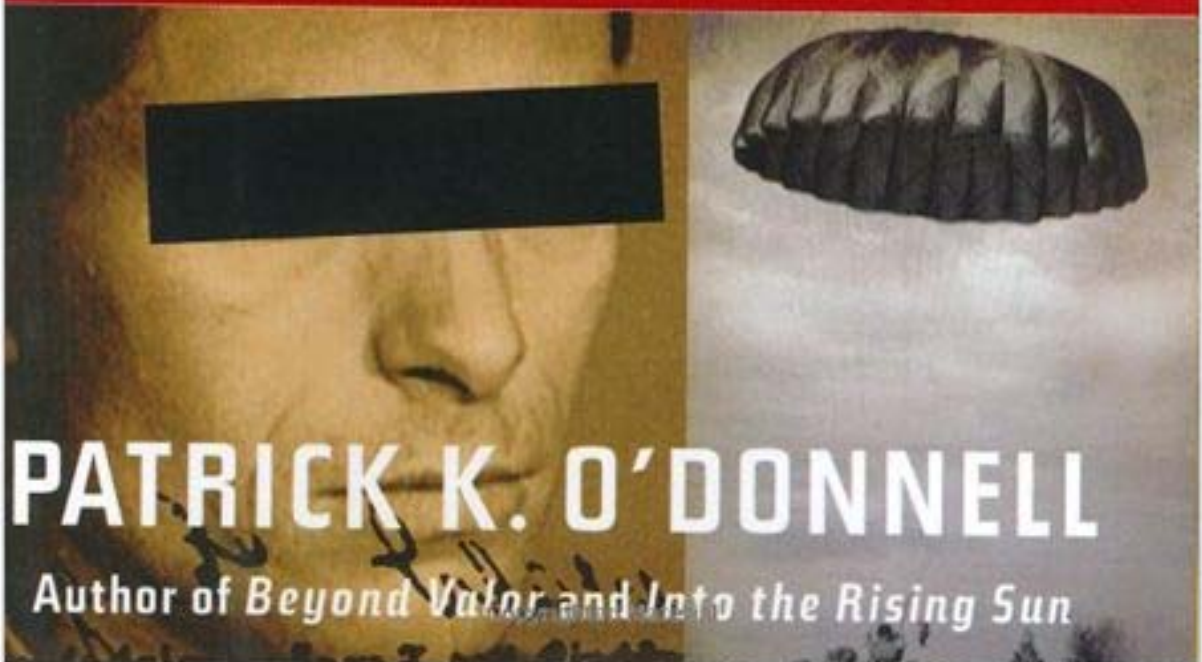




OPERATIVES,
SPIES, and
SABOTEURS

The Unknown
Story of the
Men and
Women of
WWII's OSS



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Prologue

A Gestapo dragnet was closing in on the abandoned farmhouse in northern France where agent René Joyeuse was busy on his radio. He was feverishly reporting the exact location of an underground V-1 rocket factory and a German oil refinery when his last sentence was cut short by the glare of a very powerful flashlight. "The house was surrounded. So I told the resistance fighters with me, 'We're surrounded, let's get out of here fast!' I was picking up my Colt .45 lying on the table when four German hand grenades were thrown into the room.

"The blasts from the grenades violently threw me on the ground twice. Miraculously, I wasn't wounded.

"We dashed into the alley and reached a small service staircase in the back of the house. We succeeded in leaving the house at the moment that the Germans entered through the garden gate.

"We were continuously attacked from 10 meters behind by grenades and submachine-gun fire, and blazing torches lit up the night. I attempted to cover our retreat with my Colt but it jammed on the fourth shot. With Colt in hand I arrived in front of a big wall separating the Secours National Park from a neighboring property next to the railroad tracks by a freight station. We all tried to scale this wall. I made two unsuccessful attempts and told the FFIs [Resistance fighters] that I wasn't going to make it and would try the wall further down. They kept trying and I never saw them again.

"I was able to scale the wall about 20 meters down. At this moment the Germans, who were posted on both sides of the block near the tracks, fired at me at a distance of 10 meters and missed me. I came upon a patrol. Seeing a running man passing them, they fired on me with their machine guns at point-blank range. They still missed me. I crossed all the tracks and came to another gate leading to a street on the side of the station. I climbed over. At this moment, two other Germans with machine guns woke up to what was going on and fired. Luckily, in climbing over the gate, I had fallen flat on my face behind a small cement parapet which caused all the bullets to ricochet. When their magazines were empty, I got up again and ran off in the direction of nearby houses. After about 200 or 300 meters of painful progress, since I was wounded in the right foot and hand, the left kneecap, and had suffered numerous contusions, I got into a house where the gate was half open and met a woman who, seeing that I was going to bring her a lot of grief, told me, 'Don't come in here! Beat it! Get out of here!' I threatened her with my pistol, begging her to 'shut up!', and went up to the fourth floor by a back staircase. I dropped down to a door to another apartment, which seemed to belong to a woman who was an informer for the Gestapo! I stayed there, near the door, the whole time holding in one hand my Colt and in the other my potassium cyanide pill [L-pill, or lethal pill]. I decided to use one or the other on myself if I were surrounded. The dragnet continued for me all night, all the nearby houses were searched, with the exception of the one I was in."¹

Joyeuse, leader of a two-man spy team, narrowly escaped with his life. The resistance men were captured and summarily executed. Despite the disaster, Joyeuse continued to gather valuable intelligence on German troop movements. Additionally, the oil refinery and German rocket plant were destroyed by Allied bombers.*

*After the war, Joyeuse returned to the United States, where he became a physician.