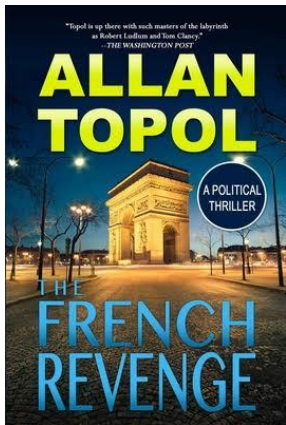


The French Revenge: A political thriller that moves at warp speed

By PAUL COLLINS

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In *The French Revenge*, his 16th novel, best-selling author and veteran Washington Lawyer Allan Topol, has crafted an adrenalinepumping thriller that is built on a suspenseful plot that's chock full of page-flipping twists and turns brought alive through fictional characters who are so real that one can almost reach out and touch them. *The French Revenge* cements Topol's well-earned reputation as a top-tier writer of international thrillers by offering

up a smart, sophisticated, and beautifully written novel of international intrigue. In *The French Revenge*, he deftly weaves a story of deception, romance and treachery by introducing readers to Anthony Ferrari, a former US Congressman now living in Milan, Italy, and his love interest, Chiara Moretti; a fiery, stunningly attractive Italian beauty who is a world renowned concert pianist. Ferrari is a well-crafted protagonist. A gritty, engaging, intense, and very human character, he draws readers in, and makes them want to believe in him. Topol has also created other characters who pull the reader down into the dark well of French politics. Among them is Louise, Ferrari's former lover who is a high level French intelligence officer, and who desperately wants to rekindle their relationship. *The French Revenge* also brings to life the very sinister Russian President Volkov, a bitter enemy from Ferrari's days as US Congressman chairing an important intelligence committee. One can't help but draw a parallel between the fictional Volkov and Russia real president, Vladimir Putin. Asked about what inspired him to write this book, and the model for Volkov, Topol says, "Several strands came together in my mind, leading to the *French Revenge*. I wanted to deal with the tortuous and tortured relationship the US has had with Russia, even since the end of the Cold War. China may be our most critical rival, but we can never forget that Russia under Putin is a formidable adversary. I modeled my fictional Russian President, Volkov, after Putin." As for crafting the character of Chiara, Topol credits his wife. "My wife, Barbara plays classical piano, and has gotten me interested in the world of top pianists, many of whom we

have heard over the years. I wanted to explore their world in *The French Revenge*." He adds, "While these are some of the strands that influenced me, in the final analysis, I wanted to write a fast moving page-turner that would entertain readers as well as educate." He has definitely hit the mark on both of his stated goals.

The stylish storyline takes readers inside the lives of people who move with ease among the upper echelon of French and Italian society, while also putting a human face on those in the high-level government and intelligence communities. The story opens by whisking one away to the idyllic beauty of the Mediterranean island of Corsica where Ferrari and Chiara are jogging along the beach during a brief romantic get-away from the pressures of her grueling international concert tour. Suddenly, Chiara is shot by a shadowy gunman who slips away in an instant. She is seriously wounded, but survives the attempted assassination. As the failed murder attempt happened in French Corsica, the investigation brings Ferrari in direct contact not only with French Intelligence, but also with his former lover, Louise. Ferrari quickly forms the belief that Russian President Volkov, a bitter political enemy from Ferrari's past life in the congress, is the one responsible for the attempt on Chiara's life. He decides to assassinate the Russian leader leaving readers to wonder if embarking on such a mission could possibly be successful. In the wake of coming so perilously to losing Chiara forever, Ferrari is shaken and enraged to the point where he is driven to levy the ultimate punishment to Volkov. Driven by seething revenge, we follow Ferrari on a thrill ride that is fraught with unpredictable, hair-raising twists and turns where nobody is who they appear to be. Mr. Topol's knowledge of the international political arena, and the frightening plausibility of such a real scenario potentially happening, puts the crystal ring of truth in his plotting. Asked about his feelings on the theme of political assassination that would target a foreign leader, Topol says, "From my reading about the assassination of JFK, the attempted assassination of Castro, and the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Rabin, I have become interested in the topic of political assassination. When these occur, the impact upon the world is huge. I asked myself whether political assassination can be a legitimate tool of US foreign policy. And if so, under what conditions. What actions would our adversary, such as the President of Russia, have to undertake before assassination was justified. I wanted to explore this question in *The French Revenge*." This latest gem from Allan Topol's literary treasure chest is a tangible proof-point that he is an author who gets better with each new offering. With a growing population of stale and predictable authors on today's scene, Topol continues to deliver fresh material that is a satisfying brand of escapism. With a plot that is gripping, and dialogue between his characters that crackles like crisp leaves in an autumn breeze, Allan Topol has penned another winner deserving of the Daniel Silva mantle. *The French Revenge* amplifies the perfect mixture of suspense, seduction and betrayal that makes it impossible to put down. Topol's skills as an accomplished story teller loom large over today's literary landscape.

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