

Background Information

About the author

Bruno Lowagie lives and works in Ghent, Belgium. In a previous life, he was an open-source software developer and entrepreneur. After selling his company, he turned his attention to writing. He first published works for Dutch and Flemish readers before beginning to translate his fiction into English in 2024.

In 2026, he shifted his focus from short fiction to screenwriting. *Operation Downfall* was his third screenplay, based on his short story ‘Codebreakers,’ originally published in Dutch. Since getting noticed by production companies can be notoriously difficult, he began adapting his screenplays into narrative form, resulting in a series of novelettes.

This book is intended as the first installment in that series. Lowagie is currently working on the second volume, *The Sisters Lovecraft*.⁵⁰

About the genre

Operation Downfall is a work of science fiction, situated at the crossroads of alternate history and steampunk.

Steampunk first emerged as a countermovement to the idea of unchecked technological progress. One of its defining features is a sense of nostalgia—specifically for a world before the rise of petroleum-driven industry, plastics, and mass mechanization.

Although steampunk often draws on the Victorian era, it is not confined to it; the genre thrives on blending fictional invention with real historical events, as this story does.

Alternate histories frequently carry an implicit political stance. In times of war—when civilian casualties rise and reason grows thin—the genre often expresses a hope that humanity might one day choose wisdom over destruction. Many conflicts could be avoided if more young people had access to, and chose, high-quality education. That is why, in this narrative, scientists such as Alan Turing are depicted as genuine heroes: people whose intellect and integrity shape the world more profoundly than armies ever could.

Alan Turing died in 1954 after eating an apple poisoned with cyanide. It remains unclear whether Turing took his own life because of his sexual orientation—the official version—or whether he was killed by British intelligence because he knew too much about secret codes and was therefore considered a security risk.

This story also strives for inclusivity. While *Operation Downfall* contains relatively few female characters, this reflects the historical period more than the author's preferences.

Between the lines, the narrative offers quiet social critique—e.g. in its depiction of the treatment of Japanese Americans during the war.

Finally, a series of endnotes highlights where the novel diverges from real history, providing context for the people, places, and events that inspired this fictional world.

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End notes

The following endnotes provide additional context for the characters, events, and settings.

¹ **End of World War II in Europe.** This story is set in the summer of 1945. In Europe, the guns had fallen silent following Germany's surrender on May 8.



Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, 1944

There was a *Europe First* deal between President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill that the Allies would prioritize defeating Nazi Germany before turning their full attention to Japan in the Pacific.

As the Allies pivoted their entire industrial might toward the Japanese mainland, they faced an empire that refused to acknowledge the mathematical certainty of its defeat.

² **Alan Mathison Turing (1912-1954).** Turing was a British mathematician, logician, and cryptanalyst. He played a crucial role in breaking German ciphers at Bletchley Park (see note 5) during World War II, most notably contributing to the defeat of the Enigma encryption system (see note 6).



Alan Turing, 1936

Turing is widely regarded as one of the founders of computer science and artificial intelligence. After the war, he worked on early computer design and theoretical biology. He was prosecuted in 1952 for homosexual acts, then illegal in the United Kingdom (see note 7), and died two years later under circumstances widely considered to be suicide.

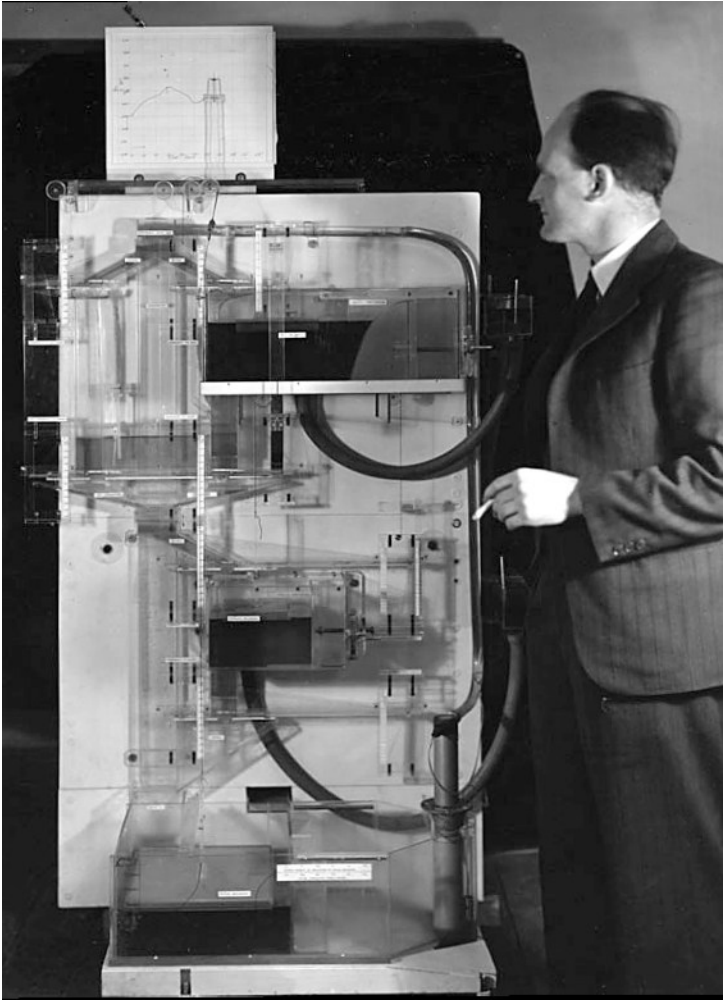
³ **End of World War II in the Pacific.** The war with Japan concluded in August and September 1945.

After the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima (August 6, 1945) and Nagasaki (August 9, 1945), Japan communicated its intent to surrender on August 10, and its unconditional surrender was announced on August 15, 1945. Formal surrender documents were signed on September 2, 1945, aboard the USS Missouri, officially ending the war (see note 48). History unfolds quite differently in this story.

⁴ **Compact Hydraulic Integrated Circuit.** In “real” history, the modern microchip only became possible after the invention of the transistor in 1947. This breakthrough is two years away from the summer of 1945, when this fictional story begins. At that moment, the electronic computer as we know it did not yet exist.

What *did* exist were the first experiments in computation without electricity. In 1936, Soviet engineer Vladimir Sergeevich Lukyanov built the *Water Integrator*, a hydraulic analog computer that solved equations through flowing water.

Later, in 1949, economist Professor A.W.H Phillips created the MONIAC, which modeled the British economy using colored liquid.



Professor A.W.H Phillips with the MONIAC

In this fictional timeline, Alan Turing pushes these real ideas further. His “Turing Chips” are crafted from etched glass and microchannels, guiding water through branching paths much like switches in a circuit. Each pair of tiny tubes encodes a simple choice—one channel for zero, the other for one—allowing logic to emerge from the movement of fluid.

The result is a kind of mechanical brain: stable, interference-proof, and entirely independent of fragile electronics. It represents a path not taken—a world in which computation grows not from sparks and wires, but from the quiet, steady flow of water.

⁵ **Bletchley Park.** This estate in Buckinghamshire served as the headquarters of the British *Government Code and Cypher School* (GC&CS) during the Second World War. From this location, Allied cryptanalysts, including Alan Turing, worked to break encrypted German communications.



Punched card machines, Bletchley Park, 1945

⁶ **Enigma machines.** These were electro-mechanical cipher devices that used rotors to encode messages. A message typed into the machine would be transformed into a seemingly random sequence of letters. An identical machine, configured with the same settings, could decode the message back into its original form.