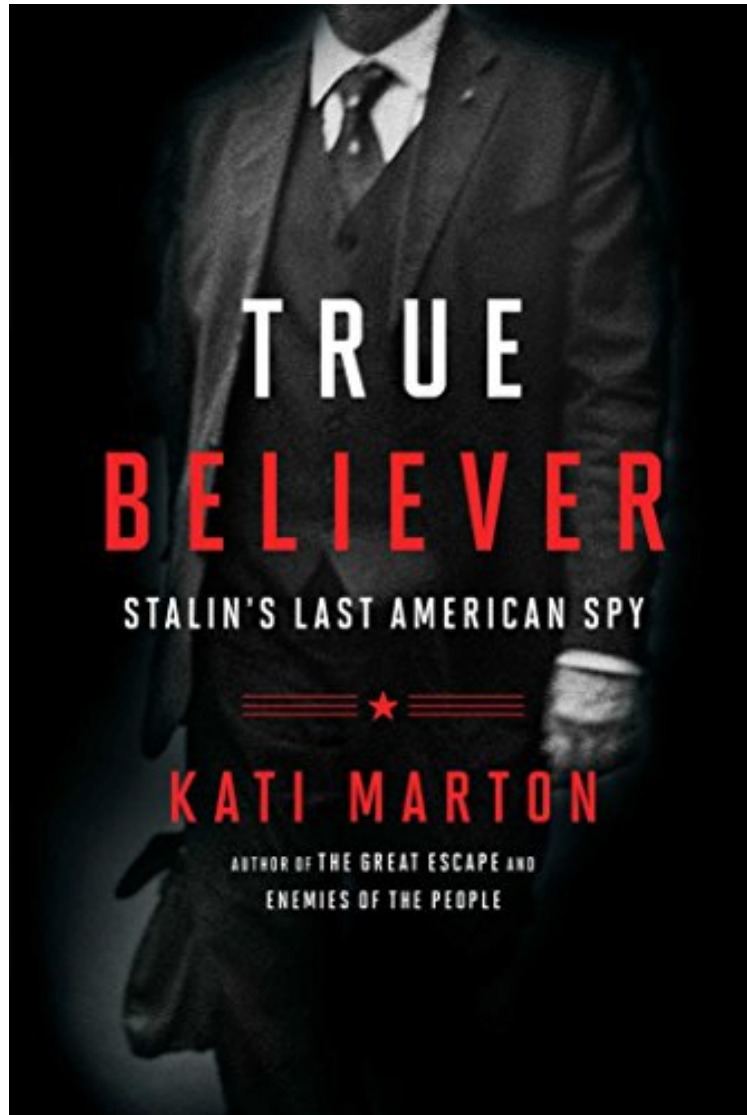


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## True Believer: Stalin's Last American Spy

*Kati Marton*

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**Kati Marton : True Believer: Stalin's Last American Spy** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised True Believer: Stalin's Last American Spy:

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Great portraits of a man of commitment and idealism and his time not that long ago.By Peter M. HerfordMs Marton has woven the history of an era into the personalities of a married couple where the husband is the committed idealist taken with the torch of Marxism and Communism that guides his life, his marriage, his rise and his downfall. The level of commitment to an ideal is far removed from the politics of today, and yet this is relatively recent history that speaks to how much the globalized world has changed and what we

left behind in the cold war. If you are old enough to have lived some of this story, the insights into events and characters is richly rewarding. For the young, this is a look into their parents and grandparents world that should open eyes and hearts to how far we have come from where we were. These are not generation gaps, they are generational canyons.<sup>3</sup> of 3 people found the following review helpful. fFfascinating and almost unbelievable recounting of a man who refused ...By James MorfinofFFascinating and almost unbelievable recounting of a man who refused to recognize that his youthful idealistic fervor was misguided and built on a platform of deceit and mass murder.<sup>5</sup> of 6 people found the following review helpful. Minor league spy; major league pawnBy John IA very interesting true story that reads like a combination spy mystery and cautionary moral tale. I could not put it down. Unlike many other history books, this one comes with a very personal perspective involving the author's parents (journalists who interviewed the "true believer" and first related his story to her), her own experience as a foreign correspondent, her familiarity with the settings, especially Prague, Budapest and Washington, and, of course, that which comes from having been married to a very highly respected US diplomat who rose through the ranks in the State Department. Read her previous books "Paris; A Love Story" and "Enemies of the People" to understand where she is coming from.Current generations who did not live through the Cold War era probably have no idea how dangerous it was for an American (spy or rescuer) to venture behind the Iron Curtain. Noel Field may not have given Stalin secrets on a par with the nuclear technology other spies gave him, but he provided valuable insider information about what the State Department was doing. And by providing original versions of coded documents he enabled the Soviets to easily break the code used by the State Department. And the hundreds of names of communists he gave Stalin probably sent most of those people to prison or death because of their association with him. He may have been a minor league spy, but he became a major league pawn in the internal political and propaganda wars Stalin was waging. His story is unique, and movingly told..

“Relevant...fascinating...vividly reconstructed.” —The New York Times Book Review “Riveting reading...a mesmerizing look at Cold War espionage.” —USA TODAY This astonishing real-life spy thriller, filled with danger, misplaced loyalties, betrayal, treachery, and pure evil, with a plot twist worthy of John le Carré, is relevant today as a tale of fanaticism and the lengths it takes us to.True Believer reveals the life of Noel Field, an American who betrayed his country and crushed his family. Field, once a well-meaning and privileged American, spied for Stalin during the 1930s and '40s. Then, a pawn in Stalin's sinister master strategy, Field was kidnapped and tortured by the KGB and forced to testify against his own Communist comrades. How does an Ivy League-educated, US State Department employee, deeply rooted in American culture and history, become a hardcore Stalinist? The 1930s, when Noel Field joined the secret underground of the International Communist Movement, were a time of national collapse: ten million Americans unemployed, rampant racism, retreat from the world just as fascism was gaining ground, and Washington—pre FDR—parched of fresh ideas. Communism promised the righting of social and political wrongs and many in Field's generation were seduced by its siren song. Few, however, went as far as Noel Field in betraying their own country. With a reporter's eye for detail, and a historian's grasp of the cataclysmic events of the twentieth century, Kati Marton captures Field's riveting quest for a life of meaning that went horribly wrong. True Believer is supported by unprecedented access to Field family correspondence, Soviet Secret Police records, and reporting on key players from Alger Hiss, CIA Director Allen Dulles, and World War II spy master, “Wild Bill” Donovan—to the most sinister of all: Josef Stalin. A story of another time, this is a tale relevant for all times.

"Relevant . . . fascinating . . . As vividly reconstructed by Marton, Noel Field's life is a window on the delusion and narcissism that fuel the self-radicalized of any era." (The New York Times Book )"Riveting reading . . . True Believer is a mesmerizing look at Cold War espionage and a chilling reminder of the destructive power of fanaticism." (USA Today)"Marton tells the incredible true story of Field's fanaticism with communism and Stalinism. Marton's own parents were the only Western journalists to ever interview Field and his wife, Herta Field. . . . The conspiracy, subterfuge, and cataclysmic destruction of Field's family and friends are all addressed in this well-researched book." (Library Journal)"This is more than just a spy story of white hats versus black hats. Kati Marton has written a gripping but nuanced account of the fanaticism and betrayal by one of the most notorious American traitors in Cold War history." (Amanda Foreman, author of A World on Fire)"A riveting account of how fanaticism arises, who's vulnerable to it, and why. A rich portrait of a lost era, with fascinating implications for our own." (Cass R. Sunstein, Robert Walmsley University Professor, Harvard University, and author of Going to Extremes)"At a time when violent extremism and fanaticism seem automatically to have an Islamic prefix, True Believer reminds us of equally brutal causes that swept up deluded young men and women, shattered families and destroyed lives. Kati Marton gives us a gripping story with a timely moral." (Anne-Marie Slaughter, President and CEO, New America, author of Unfinished Business: Women Men Work Family)"In the name of justice and socialist revolution, Noel Field lost his own humanity. His story is a chilling piece of history but also a timeless moral lesson about how unmoored idealism can abet murderous evil. Kati Marton tells it all powerfully, with sensitivity to the psychology as well as the politics of a ruined life." (Sean Wilentz, author of The Politicians and the Egalitarians)"In this real-life thriller, Kati Marton brings a lost chapter of the Cold War back to vivid life. In telling the story of Noel Field, Marton—a distinguished chronicler

of the vicissitudes of the 20th century, particularly in Europe—draws on a cast of characters ranging from Alger Hiss to Josef Stalin. This is a terrific piece of history.” (Jon Meacham, author of *Destiny and Power* and *Thomas Jefferson*)“Noel Field is one of the most fascinating spies produced by the Cold War. He twisted his soul trying to do good in the world. Marton's beautiful storytelling reminds us of the America that spawned traitors. If you can understand Field, you can understand America. A one of a kind book.” (Joe Weisberg, creator and executive producer of *The Americans*)“Marton tells Field's story beautifully, reminding readers of the potential horrors of well-meaning but unquestioning idealism.” (Publishers Weekly (starred review)) “A true story of intrigue, treachery, murder, torture, fascism, and an unshakable faith in the ideals of Communism. . . . exciting to read, a fresh take on espionage activities from a critical period of history.” (Washington Independent of Books)“[Noel Field's] sordid story is grippingly related by Kati Marton, whose parents, Hungarian journalists, covered various show trials that resulted in Field and other “traitors to the cause” being jailed. She also gained access to Field family papers and those of persons brought down with him.” (The Washington Times)“Fascinating” (The Washington Free Beacon)“True Believer is both thorough and engaging. . . . Every generation has its share of such fanatics, secure in their belief that they are doing good even as they leave chaos and destruction in their wake. This portrait of a monster is an important lesson of what communism wrought.” (The Weekly Standard)“Marton, author of *Enemies of the People*, builds a detailed narrative with twists and turns galore....poignant and almost defies belief.” (Newsday)“Riveting page-turner” (The National)“Fascinating and stirringly relevant...remarkable.” (Guardian US)“Kati Marton richly documents the story of the Swiss-born, Harvard-educated Noel Field....[Marton] builds a detailed narrative with twists and turns galore.” (Daily Gazette)About the AuthorKati Marton is the author of *True Believer: Stalin's American Spy*; *Enemies of the People: My Family's Journey to America*, a National Book Critics Circle Award finalist; *The Great Escape: Nine Jews Who Fled Hitler and Changed the World*; *Hidden Power: Presidential Marriages That Shaped Our History*; *Wallenberg*; *The Polk Conspiracy*; and *A Death in Jerusalem*. She is an award-winning former NPR and ABC News correspondent. She lives in New York City.Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.True Believer CHAPTER 1 A SWISS CHILDHOOD I went to Communism, as one goes to a spring of fresh water. —Arthur Koestler NOEL HAVILAND FIELD spent his first eighteen years in the Swiss lakeside town of Zurich. It was a tidy if dull place, where money, science, and Christian values commingled. Here Noel's father, Dr. Herbert Haviland Field, a Harvard-trained biologist and Quaker pacifist, set up his research and documentation institute. Switzerland, then as now, cherished its neutrality in a sea of fractious neighbors. Beneath its tranquil surface, however, Zurich was a listening post for both sides during the first and second world wars. Both the elder Field and his son Noel would be swept up in Zurich's web of intrigue—the son more lethally than the father. A burly, bushy-bearded Victorian paterfamilias, Noel's father built the Field family's massive stone house—the very embodiment of their solid, New England values. In the Harvard alumni newsletter of 1938, the elder Field was described by a classmate as “one of the most high minded and pure minded men I have ever known, and I doubt that the Quaker spirit ever produced a finer specimen of mentality or character.” Field family life revolved around this intimidating and remote figure. All Fields addressed each other in the Quaker manner as “Thee” and “Thou.” This earnest, rather austere family was singularly ill prepared for the intrigue in which they would soon be enmeshed. The Fields first settled in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1644. They were proud of their sturdy Yorkshire roots, and their political nonconformism. Even during the Revolutionary War, the Quaker Fields, referred to as “between the lines,” supported neither colonists nor the colonial power, and were thus harassed by both. Pacifism and service were the family's core values and, in quest of both, the Fields gradually migrated from Boston to Brooklyn over the next hundred years. In keeping with their Quaker faith during the Civil War, the family actively supported and sheltered slaves in flight from Southern states. Much later, Noel described himself as a “dreamy, feminine, and withdrawn child, shunning interaction with peers.” From early childhood, Noel was an outsider: an American in a Swiss school; taller, more awkward, and more earnest than other children. Emulating his father's air of moral superiority did not win him playmates. The boy preferred long, solitary Alpine rambles to the rough-and-tumble of the schoolyard. He had one companion, a classmate, Herta Vieser. The plump, blond daughter of a German civil servant, she, too, was an outsider. With her long blond braids and full figure, Herta was in sharp contrast to the gangly Noel. But in her eyes, the bookish, wistful Noel could do no wrong. Herta's unshakeable devotion eased the awkward youth's loneliness—and would for a lifetime. For the rest of his life, Noel would recall a single childhood event more vividly than any other. Shortly after the end of World War I, Dr. Field took Noel, his eldest child, on a tour of the battlefields. The trip was of such importance to his father that he ordered a car from America to make the drive to the recent killing fields of Verdun and the Marne. The still-smoldering battlefields where not a living thing stirred made a powerful impression on the young Noel. He never forgot the landscape of blackened tree trunks and lunar craters full of stagnant water, where hundreds of thousands of the Continent's youth had recently been slaughtered—and for what? A few miles of territory. They rested under mounds of still-fresh earth—and left a searing memory. Thanks to the machine gun, automatic rifle, poison gas, airplane, and tank, a thousand soldiers died per square meter in Verdun, Dr. Field explained to his son. And what was achieved by four and a half years of carnage? The trauma suffered by the eleven million soldiers who returned from the front—having experienced poison gas, exploding grenades, and artillery barrages, as well as the deaths of their comrades—was beyond compensation. Noel took his father's unspoken

message to heart: Do something to prevent the next one. “A Call to the Young Throughout the World” by N. Field, founder of the “Peace League of Youth,” was the young man’s first political engagement and a direct result of that shattering battlefield expedition. “We must not wait any longer,” Noel wrote in a tract that his mother typed and that he distributed to his classmates at his Swiss gymnasium. “If the rising generation of the whole world were to cry with one voice: Enough of slaughter and murder! From now on let there be peace! If they were to set to work and start a real crusade against war, then a world peace will no longer be an idle dream.” Noel then outlined a ten-part program for the youth of the world, including abolishing war propaganda and military training in schools. “So come and lend a hand!” Noel urged his classmates. “Forget the barriers of country, race, and religion, show that we are brothers! We will not confront might with might, but with the persuasive power of a great idea, the firm conviction of a divine ideal.” Within a decade, the young man would find both the divine ideal and the brotherhood he hungered for. “My high school days in Switzerland during World War I,” Noel wrote, “were the determining factor in the choice of my subsequent life. They set up my dual interest . . . to work for international peace, and to help improve the social conditions of my fellow being.” He might have added that they also laid the groundwork for his dual life. Wedged among France, Germany, and Italy, Switzerland, haven to fleeing European radicals, was the ideal spot for Allen W. Dulles, a spy operating under diplomatic cover, to set up shop in Berne, the Swiss capital. Shortly after Noel’s field trip with his father in 1918, he met Dulles, whose name would be like a curse on Field’s future. Dulles, two decades from becoming the first director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the brother of future secretary of state John Foster Dulles, was in search of local “assets.” Dr. Field, who straddled the expatriate and Swiss communities, was known to keep his ear to the ground, a good man to know. During World War I, the elder Field routinely shared high-level local gossip with US officials. In fact, his meddling nearly ruined the career of American consul James C. McNally. Field complained to the State Department about McNally’s too “pro German” attitude. McNally never forgave him, though others admired Field’s zealous patriotism. Another Swiss-based American diplomat, Hugh Wilson, described Noel’s father as having “the gentlest, bluest, most candid pair of eyes that I ever saw on an adult man. They were the eyes of an unsophisticated and lovable child.” His son inherited that candid, childlike aspect and used it to great advantage. In early 1918, Allen Dulles joined the Field family for lunch in their spacious lakeside home. “What do you plan to do with your life?” Dulles asked the reedy fourteen-year-old Noel. “To bring peace to the world,” the boy answered without hesitation, making his father beam with pride. The lesson of the battlefield had hit its mark. Dulles and Noel Field would meet again, two decades later, and cause each other great trouble. On the morning of April 5, 1921, everything changed for the Field family. Fifty-three-year-old Herbert Field suddenly suffered a massive heart attack and died. The peaceful, well-ordered family life presided over by the aloof father was shattered. The eldest of four children, Noel—the focus of his father’s attention—was hardest hit. Moreover, he felt a personal responsibility for his father’s death. The night before his fatal attack, Dr. Field had fulfilled one of his dreams. A passionate admirer of Richard Wagner, he had talked for years of taking Noel to the first Swiss performance of Parsifal. “In the months and years after his death,” Noel later wrote, “I built up a guilt complex, believing that I had caused [Father’s] death by hurrying him up the stairs at the opera performance to which we arrived late.” His father had high hopes for his bright, sensitive son. But he left the job unfinished. Noel, emotionally immature and highly sensitive, was suddenly unmoored. Full of outrage at the world’s cruelties and guilt at his privileged status, he was now without direction or guidance. Years later, he wrote his younger brother, Hermann: You ask for my memories of our beloved father. . . . I loved, revered and stood in awe of him, almost as a distant, unknown and unknowable god. He was often absent and even when at home, always so busy that I was afraid to approach him (I can still hear Mother’s “Hush, Father is busy, don’t disturb him!”). [After his death] I began a pathological hero worship in which I pictured him as one of the greatest saints of modern times and swore to imitate him as a means of relieving my guilt. Of one thing I am certain: had he lived longer, there would have been growing conflict between him and his elder son—unless I had simply taken over his ideals and sought to adapt my thinking to his. This I know: his socialism was of the religious kind and in his diary he expressed hostility to the more militant variety that I ultimately found my way to. At age seventeen, Noel lost the powerful figure who might have moderated his dreams of changing the world. How differently might Field’s tragic life have turned out had his father lived long enough to harness his son’s idealism to a milder faith? “Not long before his death,” Noel wrote his brother, “Father had a serious talk with me about my future. . . . It was, as I remember, mainly a question of his desire that I should . . . go to America, to study at his beloved Harvard.” Reeling from the sudden loss of their patriarch, his widow, Nina, and her four children set off for Herbert Haviland Field’s cherished homeland. There, too, Noel Field would be a stranger.