

AFTERWORD BY JOE REILLY,
FORMER FBI SPECIAL AGENT



DEEP
UNDER **JACK**
COVER **BARSKY**
WITH CINDY COLOMA

MY SECRET LIFE & TANGLED ALLEGIANCES
AS A KGB SPY IN AMERICA

An incredible look at the astounding journey of a KGB officer in the midst of the Cold War. Heartbreaking, exciting, intriguing. An honest account of one of the most difficult careers known to man. Equal parts memoir, spycraft guide, and historical document, *Deep Undercover* perfectly describes the crippling insularity of the spy's life.

JOE WEISBERG

Creator, showrunner, and executive producer, *The Americans*

Jack Barsky's ultimate act of courage is sharing this intimate story that sheds light on the true personal consequences of a life in espionage. Gripping and emotional, *Deep Undercover* peers beyond the Iron Curtain for a look into the world of a KGB officer illegally living abroad. Instead of romanticizing the life of a spy, Barsky tells his story with honesty and heart.

JOEL FIELDS

Writer and executive producer, *The Americans*

Our fascination with spies runs deep, particularly those who are under deep cover, the so-called sleeper agents. Living and operating under aliases, with elaborate background stories (called legends), they intrigue us for the double lives they live, sometimes with families—and even children. (The current popularity of FX Network's award-winning *The Americans* attests to this.) But what is the truth beneath the often glamorized surface? How are they selected, trained, and dispatched to foreign countries? What are their secret assignments? *Deep Undercover* lifts the veil on one such case, giving us a glimpse of a secret life, showing us the price one man paid for undertaking such an assignment. Reading his intriguing story, you realize how few of us would willingly undertake such a mission—or succeed!

PETER EARNEST

Executive director, International Spy Museum

As a double agent who worked against Russia, I thought I had heard it all. Then I heard Jack's story.

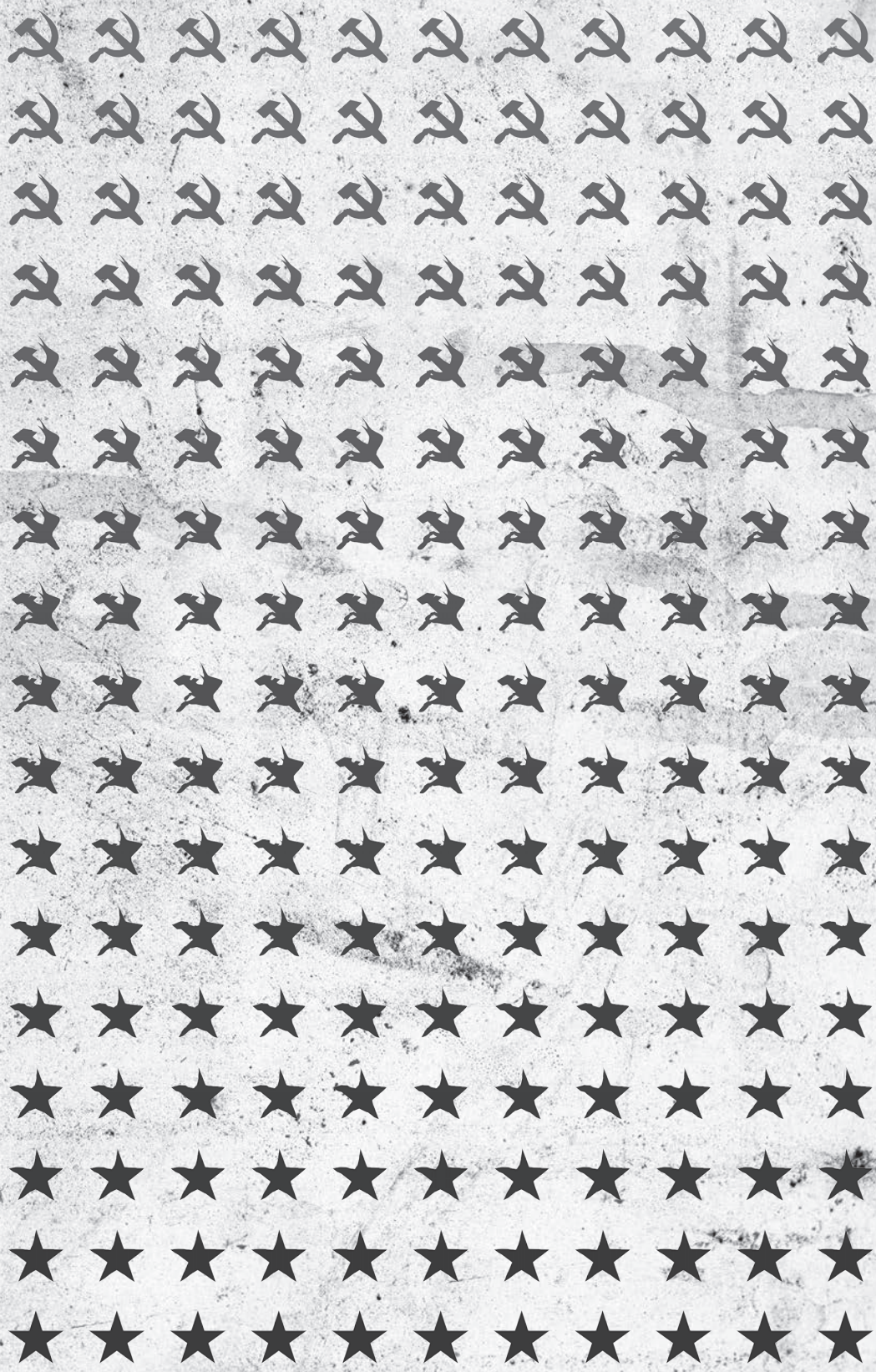
NAVEED JAMALI

Former double agent and author of *How to Catch a Russian Spy*

Jack's honesty and sincerity were clear from the first time I met him. He was on a journey, and I was privileged to watch something very special unfold. Jack's story is fascinating, and *Deep Undercover* tells it well. A true story of redemption and what can happen when God's healing love breaks through our mind, heart, and relationships.

ROB CRUVER

Senior pastor, Zarephath Christian Church; executive director, Urban Impact; and author of *The Blue Jeans Gospel*





DEEP UNDER COVER

**JACK
BARSKY**
WITH CINDY COLOMA



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PROLOGUE

DECEMBER 1988

As I walked briskly toward my subway stop at 80th and Hudson in Queens, I glanced casually, out of well-worn habit, at a steel beam near the entrance to the station. What I saw there—an innocent-looking red dot—caused a momentary break in my stride. That dot was a secret message from the KGB: *Severe danger. Activate emergency procedure.*

For almost two years, I had managed to keep my worlds from colliding, but now a decision had to be made.

Two weeks later, I was still stubbornly resisting the extraction order. Instead of retrieving my emergency documents and making my way to Canada, I passed the red dot every morning, boarded the A train, and continued my commute to work. I was stalling, but I knew I couldn't make time stand still. That dot was a stark, daily reminder that I was disobeying orders, and the gravity of my situation pulled at me day and night, like an ever-tightening loop I couldn't escape. How much longer could I dodge the final decision?

Now, on a dreary December morning, as I prepared to leave my second-story apartment, I silently opened the door to Chelsea's room to steal a peek at my little princess. At the window, it was still pitch dark, but the nightlight cast enough of a beam for me to see those beautiful eyes, closed in peaceful sleep, and the riot of dark, curly hair that I never grew tired of caressing. I resisted the urge to bend down and kiss her, not wanting to risk waking her when I really needed to catch my train. Still, how could something so perfect be mine?

Without question, this child had stolen my heart. She wasn't my

first, or my only, but she was the first I'd been granted time with, all eighteen months of her life thus far. Whenever she reached for me, fell asleep on my shoulder, or touched my face with her downy soft hands, my heart was overcome with a love I had never thought possible: unconditional and all-consuming.

Checking my watch, I backed out of the room without a single creak in the wood floor. After gathering my briefcase, I left Chelsea and my wife asleep inside the apartment and ventured into the dank December darkness. The city that never sleeps would wait another half hour for the sun to tease the edges of the morning sky.

As I walked toward the subway station, I thought about the web I had created and had now trapped myself within. In America, under the guise of computer analyst Jack Barsky, I had successfully established myself as an undercover agent spying on behalf of the Soviet Union. Back in East Germany, I was a different person with a different name and a different life. And that life was now calling me back. As an embedded agent of the KGB, I was expected to obey authority and follow orders.

The red dot told me to run—my cover must have been compromised—but that little girl asleep at home was holding me here, along with something else that I couldn't quite put my finger on.

After my usual ten-minute walk, I passed the steel beam with the dot and entered the westbound platform at 80th and Hudson. The station was populated with only a smattering of other commuters who, like me, had come early to avoid the morning rush.

As I looked in the direction from which the train would soon appear, I noticed an unusual movement off to the right in the periphery of my vision—the dark figure of a man who did not fit the appearance of a typical commuter. He seemed to be moving toward me, though tentatively, as if stalking an unsuspecting prey. Before I could fully digest the situation, he was at my side.

“You must come home,” he whispered with a thick Russian accent as he leaned in toward me, “or else you are dead.”

PART I

THE MAKING OF A SPY

1

MY PARENTS HUDDLED at the kitchen table, pressing their ears toward a small cathode-ray tube radio, a relic that had survived the war but brought in only three stations. As my father fiddled with the knobs, trying to minimize the static, I scooted close to the small wooden table to find out what was going on. My mother rocked my baby brother, shushing him gently so they could make out what was being said on the radio. The dramatic sound of a voice speaking in a language I did not understand rose against the background of Chopin's somber "Funeral March." The equally gloomy German translator was heard on top of that.

On that early March day in 1953, all three radio stations were broadcasting only one event: the funeral of the great Soviet leader Joseph Stalin. Everywhere across the Eastern Bloc, people were spellbound, glued to their radios, just as we were.

"Vati," I asked, "who was this man Stalin? Why is he dead? What is the Soviet Union?"

My father tried his best to explain the situation in terms that my four-year-old mind could grasp.

"Comrade Stalin was a great man. He was the leader of the Soviet Union, a huge country that defeated Hitler. Under Stalin's leadership we were going to build a country where everyone could be happy. Today we are saying good-bye to one of the greatest men in history."

"So is everything going to be okay? Will you still get me a bicycle when I'm ready to start school, as you promised? Will I still get pudding on Sunday?"

"Yes, Albrecht, I think we will be okay. It might get a bit harder

without Stalin, but there are some things you will not understand until you are a bit older.”

This was his way of telling me that further questions would not be welcomed.



Discovering my roots and heritage came to me in increments over the years: some remembered, some overheard, and some retold when I was old enough to ask. Most of the early pieces came in conversations with my mother.

What I know for certain is that I was born in a dreadful place at an unfortunate time—four years after Adolf Hitler’s suicide effectively ended World War II in Europe. While the Americans, British, and French were busy rebuilding the western occupied zones in Germany, life in Soviet-controlled East Germany became a daily struggle for survival. The devastation from the war was only made worse by the Soviets’ removal of valuable assets that had survived the Allies’ aerial bombardment, including entire factories and a large part of the country’s infrastructure. As a result, East Germany regressed economically and technologically by at least thirty years. And more than at any other time in the twentieth century, acquiring nutritious food became the number one priority in the land.

My parents first met in January 1948 at a teachers’ orientation in the village of Rietschen, which was in a particularly poor area of East Germany not far from the Polish border. Though six years apart in age, Judith Faust and Karl-Heinz Dittrich were both recent graduates of the *Neulehrer* new teacher’s program, an initiative introduced by the Allies in postwar Germany to develop teachers not tainted by connection to the Nazi regime, and both had grown up during the Great Depression, Hitler’s ascendance to power, and the hardships of the most destructive war in the history of humanity.

For both my parents, their first teaching assignments signaled a new beginning, allowing tentative dreams about the future to begin to germinate in their hearts. Both had traveled to Rietschen from their parents’ homes in Kaltwasser and Reichenbach, and it had taken

them both the better part of the day to cover the thirty-kilometer distance. In those days, public buses were almost nonexistent and the trains were unreliable—at best, travel was an unpleasant adventure with uncertain outcomes. Schedules weren't worth the paper they were printed on, and the only thing predictable about the railroads was their unpredictability.

As Principal Panzram laid out the curriculum and the assignments for the coming school year, Judith's eyes frequently wandered to the cleanly dressed, bright-eyed Karl-Heinz, who listened to the principal with intensity. His fine features, high cheekbones, piercing gray eyes, and straight black hair gave his face the look of a movie star.

Not yet twenty years old, Karl-Heinz was the youngest member of the group, and his gangly frame made him look even younger, like someone who needed to be taken care of. Unlike Karl-Heinz, who was just starting out, Judith had six more years of life experience and six more years of hardship under her belt.

My mother was born in 1922 in Kaltwasser, where her parents, Bernhard and Zilla, worked as head forest ranger and cook at the estate of a German count. She had two sisters, Ruth and Eva. Those biblical names, and the fact that my mother sang in a church choir prior to marrying my father, lead me to believe that she was raised in a Lutheran family, though I have no other evidence of spirituality among my extended family or ancestors, and God was never mentioned in our home.

Because my mother grew up on a country estate, she never lacked for basic nutrition, a fact that may have accounted for her healthy appearance when so many others during those years looked emaciated. Her sparkling blue eyes projected intelligence and independence, but her plain, loose-fitting, full-length dresses marked her as a country girl. She wore no lipstick, and her shoulder-length hair was tied in a conservative knot at the back of her head.

In spite of their numerous differences, Karl-Heinz and Judith had two things in common: They were both new teachers, and they were strangers in the village of Rietschen. Consequently, they often turned to each other for companionship between classes and sometimes at the end of the school day.

In the spring of 1948, Karl-Heinz caught a virulent strand of

tuberculosis. There were no antibiotics available for treatment. The village doctor could only prescribe bed rest and good nutrition. Getting rest was not a problem, but finding healthy food was an almost impossible proposition.

At this point, Judith's maternal instincts took over, and she began to care for her ailing friend and colleague. Every day after school, she stopped by Karl-Heinz's small apartment to keep him company and feed him whatever food she had scrounged up. Somehow she managed to acquire several pounds of rye meal from a local farmer, which she turned into a water-based porridge that became a staple in my father's diet as he convalesced.

After two months of Judith's loving care, Karl-Heinz overcame the disease and promptly fell in love with the woman who, most likely, had saved his life. In October 1948, these two ill-matched friends tied the knot at my grandparents' home in Kaltwasser.

Their marriage was unlikely to succeed in the long run. It rested on the fragile foundation of my father's need for a mother figure and my mother's strong desire to fill that role, as well as her pride at having captured such a handsome young fellow at a time when there was a severe shortage of eligible men in postwar Germany.

It appears that my father, virility restored, expressed his gratitude to my mother in more ways than one before they were married. She most likely knew she was pregnant at the time of the wedding.



At the end of April 1949, my mother was granted a one-month pregnancy leave in anticipation of my birth. My father accompanied her to his parents' home in Reichenbach. The plan was that she would give birth there.

My father had recently joined the Socialist Unity Party (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*—SED) and felt compelled to join the parade on May 1, 1949, in honor of International Workers' Day. He convinced his father to participate by suggesting they have a Sunday morning drink after the parade.

The weather in Reichenbach on that morning was typical for

springtime in Germany—gray skies, temperatures hovering around 60 degrees Fahrenheit, and a steady drizzle. The May Day parade was supposed to be a celebration, but the mood among the motley crowd of marchers making their way slowly through the deserted center of town did not reflect that sentiment. What was there to celebrate? Hitler and the Nazis had turned German pride into utter shame and dejection. Soviet rule was hard and unpredictable, and there was still not enough food for everyone. The average ration across occupied East Germany amounted to just under 1,500 calories.

The effects of this starvation-level diet were particularly apparent among the male marchers, including my father and grandfather, who had dressed in their best suits for the occasion. Their jackets hung loosely from bony shoulders, and their pants were held in place by suspenders. Indeed, these were lean times for bringing a child into the world.

But that all became a moot point late in the evening of May 17, when Judith's contractions began to intensify and my grandmother summoned the local midwife. The three women spent the entire night awake in the small bedroom usually occupied by my grandparents.

My father and grandfather also had a rough and sleepless night. Camped out in the home's tiny kitchen, they bravely consumed several bottles of homemade apple wine—enough to induce a headache so terrible that they both later insisted they had suffered as much pain as my mother had in labor.

Sleep would have been hard to come by that night anyway. Starting at 4:00 am, a seemingly endless parade of Soviet troops passed near the house. The rattling, screeching, and clanking of the Russian tanks on the granite cobblestones of Löbauer Straße was nearly unbearable, and nobody in the immediate vicinity had a good rest that night.



I was born into a postwar world in which tensions between East and West were rapidly escalating. Just four weeks after the lifting of the Soviet blockade of West Berlin, which was five days after my birth, the western occupied zones of Germany were combined into the newly formed Federal Republic of Germany, also called West Germany. The

subsequent establishment of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in East Germany formalized the division that would last for the next forty-one years and quickly became a focal point in the Cold War. I was born in the GDR, on the Soviet-controlled side of the line.

The entire trajectory of my life is rooted in the geographic location of my birth. By the time Stalin died, it had become clear that East Germany would continue to evolve into a Communist dictatorship that might one day call upon one of its children to serve the Communist cause—perhaps in a major way. It is indeed an interesting coincidence that my first childhood memory is that of Comrade Stalin’s funeral, the man most responsible for the establishment of Communist East Germany.