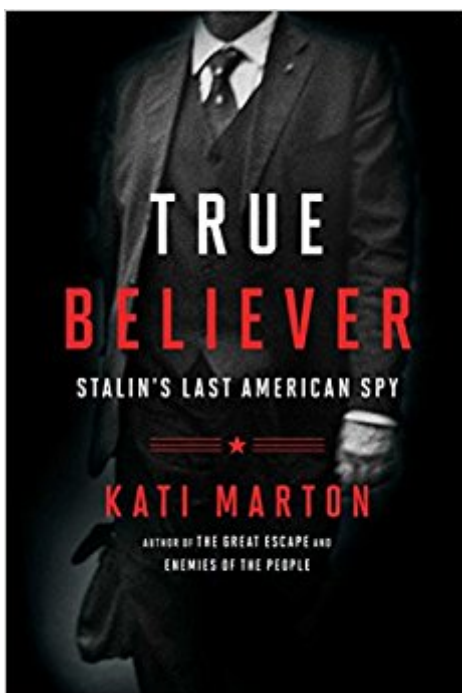


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# True Believer: Stalin's Last American Spy



## Synopsis

“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 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.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 304 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster; 1st edition (September 6, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1476763763

ISBN-13: 978-1476763767

Product Dimensions: 6.2 x 1.1 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 60 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #119,576 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #96 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > Russia #120 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > True Crime > Espionage #243 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Intelligence & Espionage

## Customer Reviews

"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 Review)"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 Review 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 Review) "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)

Kati 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.

Journalist Kati Marton's early life intersected with the subject of this biography when she was a child in Budapest where the Fields were in prison and later living in permanent exile. Like several of the family and associates of Noel Field, the author's parents were Hungarian journalists who were imprisoned by the Moscow puppet regime. So she is the ideal author for a biography of an American traitor. Noel Field was from a Quaker family and lived most of his life in Europe but returned to the

United States to attend Harvard from which he graduated in just two years. He was hired by the Foreign Service and was regarded as one of the most brilliant people on the Western European desk at the State Department. He soon and permanently fell under Joe Stalin's spell and became a dedicated Communist agent and turned a Unitarian refugee rescue humanitarian organization into a Communist rescue organization. A much more uplifting biography of a man with long service and loyal service with the State Department is John Lewis Gaddis magnificent biography "George F. Kennan: An American Life." Both Kennan and Field were from old American families, both men were brilliant, idealistic, somewhat naive and Ivy League educated, but they chose very different and antagonistic paths in their roles in the Cold War

Ms 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.

FFascinating 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.

A 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..

I read most of her books. This one is one of her best. Did an amazing review. Coming from Czechoslovakia I still remember the Slnasky process and Field's so "called involvement. It is hard to believe how he good remained a fanatic communist. Congratulation this book is as good as the one of the nine "Magyars" who changed the world. Paul Schweitzer MD

An outstandingly authored book about a previously not well known communist spy - until now. An illuminating and well researched read that is difficult to put down. Noel Field although bright and seemingly intelligent was quite delusional and perhaps unwilling to admit to fault and failure not only with his own ideology but that of Stalin. Field ultimately was responsible as most spies are for the deaths of many individuals as well as the awful imprisonment of his own family members. It is a reminder of the folly of youth and their romance of ideologies that are nothing more than brutal thuggery. All through history youth encounter these moments in history. One is reminded of The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie wherein a young protege of hers goes to fight in the Spanish Civil War and as always, it doesn't end well. This book is a perfect introduction to any reader unfamiliar with the Soviet Union, Cold War and spy years.

Excellent account of a little-known, or more particularly little-talked about time in our national history. Kati Marton's connection to the people and events gives the book a great deal of credibility and, as a plus, her writing style makes for a fast-paced and interesting journey. .

If you are interested in Cold War politics, this book is for you. True Believer is a rollercoaster of a biography that takes you to the very core of the 1940-1950's geopolitical landscape. Highly recommend!

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