



Deep Undercover: My Secret Life and Tangled Allegiances as a KGB Spy in America

Jack Barsky

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One decision can end everything . . . or lead to unlikely redemption.

Millions watched the CBS *60 Minutes* special on Jack Barsky in 2015. Now, in this fascinating memoir, the Soviet KGB agent tells his story of gut-wrenching choices, appalling betrayals, his turbulent inner world, and the secret life he lived for years without getting caught.

On October 8, 1978, a Canadian national by the name of William Dyson stepped off a plane at O'Hare International Airport and proceeded toward Customs and Immigration.

Two days later, William Dyson ceased to exist.

The identity was a KGB forgery, used to get one of their own--a young, ambitious East German agent--into the United States.

The plan succeeded, and the spy's new identity was born: Jack Barsky. He would work undercover for the next decade, carrying out secret operations during the Cold War years . . . until a surprising shift in his allegiance challenged everything he thought he believed.

Deep Undercover will reveal the secret life of this man without a country and tell the story no one ever expected him to tell.

Deep Undercover: My Secret Life and Tangled Allegiances as a KGB Spy in America Details

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From Reader Review Deep Undercover: My Secret Life and Tangled Allegiances as a KGB Spy in America for online ebook

Yibbie says

This is an incredibly sad book. It's one long chronicle of lying, deceit, betrayal, abandonment, loneliness, confusion, and bitterness. You really won't like Jack. Not for most of the story anyway. Every decision he makes is entirely self-centered. He betrays everyone that comes into his life. There are many situations, relationships that are not good. Many are sinful. They are part of the story and he speaks of them as delicately as possible. Then! Then he met someone who he couldn't betray. Slowly, oh so slowly he starts to live for someone else.

The last few chapters are what make this book worth reading. Without them, it would just be the memoirs of a low-level spy. They give the meaning to both this book and his life and are a beautiful example of God pursuing a sinner.

I received a free Advanced Review Copy of this book through NetGalley and Tyndale House Publishers. Its content and form were not final. But, there was one paragraph that was so powerful and important, that it brings the rest of the book into the proper perspective and makes it worth reading. So let me recommend that you read it.

Becky Giovagnoni says

This is the history of a man who has lived one of the most fascinating lives I've ever heard. The writing, however, is terrible. Dry and wooden. It's inconceivable to me how a story with so much adventure and drama and intrigue could be told in such a bland and boring way.

Callie says

I didn't really make New Year's resolutions this year, but I mentioned before that an unofficial "goal" for me is to read more about the Cold War. The Cold War was kind of a big deal, and it's pretty amazing when you think about that we fought an entire war without any official shots being fired back and forth. Like many millennials though, I didn't understand it that well, so this is the year I chose to remedy that.

Deep Undercover is the story of Jack Barsky, a former KGB spy turned proud American citizen and Christian. I loved this book! Barsky's story is written as narrative non-fiction, so it reads more like a novel, and it is fascinating. This book gave me a really good idea of what it was like in East Germany in the post-World-War-II era, and how many East Germans thought their communist government was anti-Nazi, and the answer to the world's problems. Even though Barsky doesn't realize until much later the atrocities that have been committed by communist regimes, it was fascinating to get a glimpse into how this ideology was explained to those who had to live under it, and how the American way of life was demonized and the truth hidden under government propaganda.

Barsky is eventually recruited by the KGB, and the stories of his "spy training" were so interesting. I think we have this glamorized view of spies in our culture, but this book made me see that a lot of these spies are just normal people, and their tasks are rather mundane. Dangerous, but not necessarily glamorous. It was so

interesting. The way he ended up defecting from the KGB was really clever too! I didn't see it coming.

The best part of this book was reading about how Barsky's view of the US (and Christianity) started to change when he actually started living here, how he developed a love of freedom through experiencing it in America and realized how much of that freedom the people in East Germany did not have.

After many personal and family struggles, Barsky ends up hiring an assistant who is a Christian. He researches the Christian faith and eventually comes to know Jesus as His Savior. This was the coolest part of the story to me. Barsky never found out why exactly he was recruited to the KGB, but if he hadn't been recruited, he never would have formed a life in America, and perhaps never would have come to Christ. It was amazing to see God working through his life, even as a KGB spy.

I highly recommend this book. Even if you aren't particularly interested in the Cold War, this book was an absolutely fascinating read! I couldn't find a big enough chunk of time to finish it in one sitting, but I was sorry every time I had to put it down!

Note: I received a copy of this book free from the publisher in exchange for a review. This is my honest opinion.

Snidely says

I found this to be a moderately interesting story. The insights into the author's youth in postwar East Germany and ultimate recruitment into the KGB were the best parts for me. His actual active years as a "spy" were probably as disappointing and anticlimactic to him as they were to read about.

I was put off by his bible-thumping, of the evangelical kind, at the end. It's allowed him to forgive himself, whether that's justified or not. I'm not sure what to say about someone who discovers ethics and compassion for others at the end of a life during which he himself had left the lives of many partners/paramours and their children in shambles.

Diana says

I really enjoyed reading this book. It reads like a novel and not autobiography. As someone who grew up in USSR I found the description of life in the East Germany very interesting. I would have given it 5 stars if not for the chapter on Jesus towards the end. This is not a fiction and I guess this is an important part of the author's life story and I respect that, but the part about finding Jesus was disappointing to me. I felt I wanted to skip it over. It left me to wonder how some one so bright, smart and intelligent found himself so brainwashed into believing in the Communist ideology so strongly earlier in life and later believing in God. Otherwise, it's a fascinating book written very candidly.

Heather Honeycutt says

I really could do 3.5 stars on this one. I really liked some of the narrative about his background in East Germany and his changing thoughts while being in the United States. I would have liked a little more of

what he actually did for the KGB while in the US, but there are probably good reasons for that omission. I also felt the end turned and wrapped up very quickly.

Charlene says

It really bothers me that I feel compelled to give 5 stars to a book in which the later chapters are devoted to proselytizing, convincing his reader know that Jesus is our savior, and only Jesus can explain how he got so lucky in his life. I am fairly certain that I would give one star to just about any other book that wasted my time in this way. Yet, this is undoubtedly a five star book. After reading about 3/4 of the book, I really began to wonder whether Jack Barsky was either delusional or an outright liar. He is neither. The story that unfolded in this book has been corroborated by the FBI, who spent a lot of money and man power following and documenting his life.

Barsky's time as a spy would have been an interesting enough story on its own, but the depictions of his childhood, complete with historical lessons about Soviet controlled East Germany (and what it was like to grow up on the other side of the wall) kept me enthralled. Reading his recounting of what it was like for the Soviet Union to strip East Germany of any prosperity, thus leaving the inhabitants to eat the most disgusting food in the hopes of helping their bodies capture a little bit of sustenance each day, made me so very glad I live where I live, in the time that I live. I cannot imagine living in East Germany after WWII. Equally interesting are his descriptions of his parents and upbringing. I always wonder what it takes to make a person into the type of spy who would put country above all else. I wish I had read this book right after reading about North Korea. There are some similarities with how Barsky viewed the world, and his political leaders, and the views held by citizens in North Korea. It always makes me wonder what things shape my view of reality that might not be as reliable an indicator of reality as I think they are.

Jack began the book talking about the inner struggle he felt when looking at his beloved American child, who was anchoring him to America, and the orders from his true home country, ordering him to come back. When watching The Americans, I can't help but wonder what it was like for the real Russian spies of the 1980s cold war. Thanks to Jack Barsky, I know have a much better idea. Without giving too much away, I can say that it was incredibly interesting to watch his thought process as it developed from childhood, to young adulthood, to the older man he is today.

This is a captivating page-turner that details a little of what governments do to spy on each other. It seems far less organized than what we see on a show like The Americans, but somehow that made the book all the better. I still feel like I don't know how well a Russian spy, or a spy from any other country for that matter, could do if they continued to put their full resources toward the goal of spying for their entire life through. Those people will probably take all their spy secrets to the grave because the kind of person who would make the best possible spy would never write a tell all book. This book might be as close as we get to those secrets.

Laine Bergeson says

This book won't win any awards for the sophistication of its prose (it's a good thing that Barsky became a spy and not a diplomat), but the story itself is intrinsically fascinating.

Karyn says

One man's story about his experience of transforming from Soviet spy to christian capitalist. No revelations here. After all, he has lived to tell this tale.

Greg Holman says

What an intriguing book. it's so crazy to think this is still going on today. I read into this more and came across where he made a cameo in the series The Americans.

Dave Capers says

Quick and enjoyable read. Would have liked more details on some specific operations but old habits die hard I suppose.

Morgan says

Such an interesting story, very well told!

I love to watch shows like The Americans and listen to podcasts like FBI Case File review so these two things lead me to this book. I love hearing about the author's upbringing and recruitment, and then the human missteps that accompany even super cool KGB spies! I won't give away the ending, but this is a story about redemption and growth as a person away from what one is always expected to do by their culture and upbringing. This story reminded me of Unbroken and of Boys In The Boat, in that there truly are people of ordinary means who have achieved extraordinary things.

Emily Weathers says

Fascinating! Jack Barsky, or should I say Albrecht Dittrich, presents an interesting perspective of East Germany during the Cold War. Barsky also describes a realistic, unglamorous, lonely portrayal of life as a spy, in which he captures the tension of the relinquishment of family and friendship in the vocation of undercover intelligence. Overall, I found this nonfiction account of espionage quite fascinating.

Susie says

Stellar. A thrill! And unexpectedly sweet and moving.

Marilyn says

I thoroughly enjoyed this autobiography of a man born in East Germany post world war 2, who became a spy for KGB. It will probably be made into a movie. He is a brilliant man educated in chemistry with plans to become a professor when he is recruited. He learns several languages, receives another degree as valedictorian in the United States and becomes successful in the computer field. He probably could be successful at whatever he attempts. In reading other reviews, some have condemned him for his past and also for cold, callous behavior toward others, but we must keep in mind that he was raised in a cold, callous environment with no affection from his parents. Some say people cannot change, but I beg to differ. This man changed practically everything about himself, freely accepted his guilt and tried hard to make amends. It is a highly interesting read.
