



The Honest Spy

Andreas Kollender , Steve Anderson (Translator)

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During one of history's darkest chapters, one man is determined to make a difference.

In the tradition of *Schindler's List* comes a thrilling novel based on the heroic true story of Fritz Kolbe, a widowed civil servant in Adolf Hitler's foreign ministry. Recognizing that millions of lives are at stake, Kolbe uses his position to pass information to the Americans—risking himself and the people he holds most dear—and embarks on a dangerous double life as the Allies' most important spy.

Summoned from his South African post to return to Nazi Germany, Kolbe leaves behind his beloved fourteen-year-old daughter, a decision made for her safety that nonetheless torments him. And as he lives under the constant threat of arrest, he wrestles with the guilt of putting Marlene Wiese, a married nurse and the love of his life, in danger as they collaborate on Kolbe's clandestine work.

But no matter the personal cost, Kolbe will not be deterred. In scenes that pulse with suspense, he emerges as a towering figure who risked everything to save innocent lives—and Germany from itself.

The Honest Spy Details

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From Reader Review The Honest Spy for online ebook

G.J. says

I liked this book but did not love it, I am not sure if the translation has to take some responsibility for this, but the writing style did seem a bit odd at times.

I found it rather difficult to like Fritz Kolbe, if all the deeds he did are indeed all based on fact then he undoubtedly was a brave man and deserves recognition for this.

Lynn says

Annoyingly histrionic main character does things like stab pictures of Hitler with a fork. Along with the spying of course.

Brenda Styer says

Doing what is right regardless of the outcome

The incredible story of Fritz Kolbes espionage during WWII as a foreign diplomat within the German Government. He paid a terrible price for his acts of courage

Brad says

Fact Can Be Better Than Fiction, But Fiction Can Improve Fact

This novel does a fine job of weaving an interesting fictional narrative around the real life and accomplishments of Fritz Kolbe. After initially wanting to match the story to reality, I finally let myself become engrossed in a very well told story. Even though I knew some of what had to occur by the end, the telling kept me wondering if it would ultimately stray too far. The story kept me reading even when I was too tired to continue.

M. LeeAnne Finney says

Great story it kept my attention. I liked the main character staying true to his beliefs and not cave in and join the nazi party. I had Marleen left in the end.

These stories need to be told. What goes on in between the lines is what the story is about Very well wrote.

Ellen Trautner says

Thank goodness I didn't have to mark this as abandoned! Halfway through reading this, I dropped my Kindle and it stopped working. For months it kept turning itself on and off, wouldn't hold a charge, etc. It was very sad, not least because I hate abandoning a book, unless it's terrible. Then I'm okay with it.

Anyways, after six months, my Kindle started working (mostly) and I was able to finish. Points that I was able to pick it up and get right back into it. I remembered most of the characters and a lot of the plot developments. I had forgotten, however, that this was based on a true story until I got to the epilogue. I definitely want to read more about the real Fritz Kolbe and the aftermath, which this book didn't really get into it. The book seemed more interested in the love story between Fritz and Marlene, whose husband was in the war and she apparently didn't care. I really didn't care about it though. I felt the ending was a little rushed, but maybe that's how the war felt too. And there were some loose ends, but again, maybe that's just a reflection of real life. I'll have to look more into the real history here!

This was originally written in German, but translated into English and was part of the Kindle first program from Amazon. That's how I stumbled upon it.

Peter Jones says

ABOUT THIS BOOK-During one of history's darkest chapters, one man is determined to make a difference.

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MY REVIEW-'Lest we forget'. Because we never should.

This is another riveting example of historical fiction set in the darkest days of WWII. Based on the true story of a wartime hero, *The Honest Spy* by Andrea Kollender no doubt takes many liberties with the truth, but in doing so provides us with an interestingly different slant on a spy story, one that I found equally compelling and intriguing.

The author has written a tense and suspenseful story of the courage shown by one man in standing up for his beliefs and daring to make a difference. I found it difficult to put this book down.

Highly recommended 4.5 stars for this, the second excellent book I have read by this author.

Thank you to Amazon Crossing for providing a digital copy of *The Honest Spy* by Andrea Kollender for review. All opinions expressed in this review are entirely my own personal opinions.

Jürgen Zeller says

Dieser Kriminalroman enthält eine Spionagegeschichte und ist zugleich ein Historischer Roman mit biografischen Elementen. Es ist die Würdigung eines äusserlich unscheinbaren aber mutigen Mannes mit hohen ethischen Prinzipien der sein Leben riskiert hat, um dem Wahnsinn des 2. Weltkriegs ein möglichst frühes Ende zu setzen oder zumindest dem herrschenden Regime der Nazis Sand in die gut geölte Kriegsmaschinerie zu streuen. Mit der Weitergabe von elementaren Geheiminformationen wird er indirekt zum Saboteur des Regimes. Das diese Geschichte auf einer realen Person und wahren Begebenheiten beruht habe ich erst ganz am Ende des Buches bemerkt.

Fritz Kolbe ist ein bescheidener Mann der während des 2. Weltkriegs im Auswärtigen Amt in Berlin arbeitet. Mit seiner dezenten wie unauffälligen Art aber einigem Arbeitseifer macht er sich bei seinen Vorgesetzten beliebt. Er ist unter anderem dafür verantwortlich, streng geheime Dokumente zu vernichten. Das er einige Berichte vor dem Feuer rettet oder vorher Kopien anfertigt bleibt unbemerkt. Fritz Kolbe wird sogar ausgewählt als diplomatischer Kurier nach Bern zu reisen. Dort nutzt er die Möglichkeit die vertraulichen Dokumente amerikanischen Geheimdienstleuten zu übergeben. Aus dem braven Beamten Fritz Kolbe wird ein eminent wichtiger Spion. Sein Doppelleben in Berlin Aufrecht zu erhalten und Informationen weiterzugeben wird mit dem sich abzeichnenden Ende des Krieges und der aufkommenden Nervosität und Verzweiflung der Politgranden immer schwieriger. Das gegenseitige Misstrauen auf den Fluren des Amtes ist spürbar und wird zu einer grossen Gefahr.

Der Schriftsteller Andreas Kollender schreibt einen von A bis Z überzeugenden Roman. In seiner Struktur und dem Verzicht auf unnötige Actionszenen weicht er zwar vom klassischen Kriminalroman ab aber dank der eingängigen Schreibweise und der feinen Personenzeichnung bleibt der Spannungsbogen über die ganzen 448 Seiten hoch. Der Autor fädelt geschickt eine aufkeimende Liebelei mit Marlene ein und als Leser identifiziert man sich mit den beiden und hofft es möge gut ausgehen. Ein lesenswertes Buch über eine schwere Zeit in der Moral und Menschlichkeit lebensgefährlich waren.

george mance says

Enjoyed it very much. Good tension leading to a surprise twist at the end. Glad it was based on a true story of an uncommon hero.

If you like WWII drama, this is a book you can't put down. Who doesn't like a wartime love story .

Geza Tatrallyay says

This is a fabulous book! A real page-turner that kept me reading well into the night. Based on the story of Fritz Kolbe, perhaps the greatest spy ever, it paints a very realistic picture of life in Berlin during the war, and the disgust of one man at the heart of the German office who decides that he cannot stand by and watch all the horrors of the Nazi regime and does something about it. Through a friend in Switzerland Kolbe manages to get in touch with the OSS operatives stationed in Bern, and delivers key Nazi documents to none other than Allen Dulles, who heads up that office. As the trusted assistant of one of the top foreign service officers, he makes several such trips. Along the way, he has a love affair with a married woman, with whom

at the end of the war he is finally able to get to safety in Switzerland. The narrative is beautifully written and translated, and Kollender switches between the technique of having Kolbe tell his story to two Swiss journalists after the war, to landing us right in the thick of things in the hotbed of the German Foreign Office. Expertly done; hats off! One of the best books I have read recently.

Steve says

Not your everyday WWII spy novel, and by no means perfect, but a sufficiently gratifying pick from the *Kindle First* heap and a relatively quick read.

As for genre, this seems to be a mash-up between historical fiction, a garden variety page-turning spy novel, and ... something else, but I'm not sure what. On one level, the novel chronicles - and, apparently, takes any number of liberties with - the career of a (subsequently) celebrated spy, an actual historical figure, of whom there, apparently, was a rather definitive biography written in 2003 (in French), later translated into German (2004) and English (2004 or 2005), *A Spy at the Heart of the Third Reich: The Extraordinary Story of Fritz Kolbe, America's Most Important Spy in World War II*. Having not read the non-fiction version - which one must assume is more factually accurate but also more dry than this story - it's impossible to compare. Frankly, I wish I'd read the biography first so that I could compare them; but, having read this, I don't see myself rushing out to read another 300 pages on the same topic (particularly now that I spent some time doing online research and figuring out what portions of the story do and don't align with the mostly widely accepted historical record)...

Of course, we're reading a translation, so I'm in no position to fully apportion my (mostly minor) frustrations with the book between the author and the translator. There's no question that it's a compelling story, and any life, let alone *such a life, at such a time and place*, must have its share of joys and sorrows. My gripe with the author is that I didn't find two of the major artistic decisions worth the candle. The temporal ping-pong between the retelling and the action story didn't seem worth it (to me) in light of the minimal pay-off at the end; nor did the introduction of a reporter and a photographer (two additional voices that, again, to me, felt like interlopers) add much to the suspense, texture or overall presentation. (*OK, introducing romantic tension between characters unrelated to the historical story line had me scratching my head*, particularly since we learn that the definitive biography of Kolbe was written long after his death.) Other than that, I wasn't inspired by the prose, and I found the vocabulary inconsistent and, in spots, disappointing. But these are mostly quibbles that kept an enjoyable, entertaining, informative, page-turning read from being something really special.

Manchester Military History Society (MMHS) says

Well written fictional account of relatively unknown WW2 spy.

Written by German author Andreas Kollender, this book is based on the life of Fritz Kolbe a member of the German Diplomatic Service during World War 2 who had access to top secret information. He provided this information to the Allies for ideological reasons and not for personal gain and smuggled hundreds of top-secret files to American intelligence from 1943 onwards, continuing undetected until the end of the war.

Allen Dulles, who became head of the CIA, but then an OSS officer in Switzerland said of Kolbe "No single diplomat abroad, of whatever rank, could have got his hands on so much information as did this man; he was one of my most valuable agents during World War II."

Although based on Kolbe, the book doesn't follow his personal life exactly and certainly creates a fiction that allow the author to portray more depth to the man in his personal life and struggles with his conscience.

The book is framed within a fictional post-war interview with a pair of journalists and starts with Kolbe in South Africa at the declaration of war which is interesting in itself, showing how German embassy and legation staff were treated upon the outbreak of war.

There's good colour to the OSS station on Berne with some of the early career of Allen Dulles being illustrated as well as the contrasts between life in neutral Switzerland versus late war Germany.

Steve Anderson has translated this book from the German and he's done a great job as the text flows well and moves along at a good pace. Whilst I'd not call it an absolute page turner, the author keeps the tension as the fear of capture and death increases with each day.

If I had to criticise anything it would have been the use of Kolbe's real name alongside an obvious fiction. Although all history is subject to someone's interpretation, I have mixed feelings around taking the name of a real person of honour and heroism and creating fiction around them, especially as a fictitious name appears to be used for Kolbe's friend in Bern.

That being said, this was as entertaining read and a good insight into the quandaries and challenges that faced Kolbe during World War 2.

I was given a copy of this book by the publisher, but was not compelled to write a positive review.

Carol says

This was very well written, I went through such a varied range of emotions reading it. You really have to admire someone who not only stays true to their beliefs under such extraordinary circumstances but also puts themselves at risk for the greater good. The story, which is based upon the real life hero Fritz Kolbe, utterly captivated me. A great read.

Steve Harding says

Interesting and important read. We and future generations should NEVER be allowed to forget what happened in the Great Wars.

The book was well written, although I found the switching between the two timelines confusing at times.

Petesea says

An OK, WW2 espionage tale that became a little too circular of a story in the last third of the book. I really enjoyed the first two-thirds of the book about Berlin, the Foreign Office and Bern. Maybe the relationship with Marlene was too much of a stretch for me.
