



The Dangerous Otto Katz: The Many Lives of a Soviet Spy

Jonathan Miles

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The FBI's file on the Soviet spy Otto Katz (1893-1952) called him "an extremely dangerous man." This label doesn't even begin to tell the story.

Katz, a daring and treacherous Soviet spy, seemed perpetually to beat the center of crucial historical moments. A deft writer and littérateur, he talked Arthur Koestler out of a life-threatening but ultimately useless mission in the Spanish Civil War, and persuaded Hollywood's gentry to donate to the Hollywood Anti Nazi League, a cover organization that fed money into Soviet coffers. He traveled to Weimar Berlin, Moscow, Mexico City, Prague, New York, and London, and may even have married the film star Marlene Dietrich. His best-known alter ego, a debonair character known as Rudolf Brea, was the inspiration for numerous film heroes, including *Casablanca's* Victor Laszlo.

In the hands of the hugely talented Jonathan Miles, this story is more than a biography; we also see this tumultuous period through Katz's unflinching eyes. His activities take us from the Spanish Civil War to Stalin's secret meetings, from Trotsky's murder to the hidden lives of major Western celebrities. He takes us to the precipice of war and, more than a few times, over it. Through Katz's quests for fame, fortune, glory, and power, Miles uncovers the shadowy side of a critical period in world history.

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