



The Story of Henri Tod

William F. Buckley Jr.

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In the summer of 1961 just as the Berlin Wall is about to slam shut the last escape route out of Eastern Europe, President Kennedy needs to know what the Soviets are up to, and Blackford Oakes is sent to Germany to get the answers. When Oakes's contact, Henri Tod, turns up missing, Blackford locks horns with East Germany's unscrupulous communist boss.

The Story of Henri Tod Details

Date : Published September 1st 1996 by Cumberland House Publishing (first published December 31st 1983)

ISBN : 9781888952124

Author : William F. Buckley Jr.

Format : Paperback 267 pages

Genre : Fiction, Mystery, Spy Thriller, Espionage

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From Reader Review The Story of Henri Tod for online ebook

Nancy Chambers says

1st Buckley book I ever read and read it several times over the years. So interesting.

Pam Walker says

I started this series many years ago and decided to finish it as I only have a few books left. It is a Cold War series involving Blackford Oates and the building of the Berlin Wall. He is sent by his boss (the CIA) to find out about it, and his contact in East Berlin is Henri Tod who has disappeared. I like Buckley's writing, and he even put himself as a writer for the National Review in this installment. For anyone who likes history, I recommend this series.

Steven says

William F. Buckley's Cold War spy novels never caused any sleepless nights for John Le Carre or Ian Fleming (much less Gore Vidal), but some were better than others, and this -- along with *Stained Glass* -- shows the Blackford Oakes series at its best. Oakes is in Berlin to check on rumors that Khruschev is about to order construction of a wall that will seal off the eastern half of the city, thus blocking the escape route to the West. As with the other Oakes novels, there is more talk than action, and most of the talk involves Henri Tod, a Holocaust survivor and freedom fighter who has been a thorn in the side of Moscow's German puppet. A pivotal role is played by a pair of lovers who stumble into Adolf Hitler's private rail car, moldering and forgotten in an East Berlin storage center. We all know (or ought to know) that the story must end in tragedy, but the Berlin setting gives *The Story of Henri Tod* an intensity and power missing from Buckley's other novels.

R.L. Anderson says

An excellent Cold War thriller featuring Buckley's hero Blackford Oakes on assignment in Berlin. Packed with action and suspense, I found it hard to put down! Although a fictional story, it is filled with historical details that give the reader an insight into that period. Fiction based on fact. I also found a certain measure of inspiration for my own writing career, in that Buckley patterned Blackford Oakes after himself. In a way, it is autobiographical. And so my own character Will Nickerson, who features in Ranch Park and It's A Place For Trees is based primarily on myself, although my stories are entirely different from Buckley's, aside from being in the mystery genre. I admit that I have a long ways to go before I can come close to producing the kind of fiction that the late great William Buckley did.

Brian D says

Buckley is a bit like Broccoli. I know it's good for me, but I can only finish so much in one sitting. This wasn't his best, but I enjoyed it. I learned some things along the way, and as always with Buckley, added to my vocabulary.

Eric says

It is August 1961. Rumors are swirling that Kruschev is about to partition Berlin. President Kennedy, still smarting from the Bay of Pigs disaster, orders the CIA to find out what Kruschev is up to.

Enter Blackford Oakes, super-spy, who travels to Berlin and contacts a group of German dissidents, the Bruderschaft, headed by the brilliant thirty-three year-old Henri Tod. Throw in an idealistic young couple, one of whom is a mole (and nephew) of the Chairman of the Council of State of the German Democratic Republic, Walter Ulbricht, a long-lost sister of Henri Tod who was taken to Auschwitz in World War II, and some entertaining ruminations by JFK, and you end up with another charming, witty and thrilling novel by William F. Buckley Jr.

Best-known for his political commentary, Buckley writes a great novel, sleek and well-paced, with endearing characters and devious Cold War machinations and politics. Henri Tod is no exception. In fact, it is the best Oakes novel yet, mainly because of the underlying tragedy of the Berlin Wall. The reader feels that Buckley was outraged at the time, and in the book even quotes an editorial from his magazine National Review, in which he promises the Soviets that the U.S. will fight to maintain a free and undivided Berlin. Sadly, he was wrong about that, and expresses his sentiments through Oakes, who tells his superior when informed that JFK will not send in the tanks: "Whittaker Chambers died last month. I think he was right that he left the winning side to join the losing side."

The novel ends with the tragedy of the Berlin Wall, as well as personal ones. It is a thoroughly delightful, if sobering, experience.

Gavin says

Berlin before the Wall but after JFK is elected. Some good quotes about how all socialism is the desire to control other people's lives.

James Cooper says

This was one of the better ones in the series. Wow! To think of Clemetina merely sewing despite all that was happening at the end of the book. I'm sure a whole paper could be written on women's roles of the time period and there could be a whole lot said in merely just the last chapter of this awesome book!!

Ginger Heskett says

I registered a book at BookCrossing.com!

Russ says

A smart, historical spy novel set during the lead up to the building of the Berlin Wall, with some fun moments of Buckley inserting himself into the narrative.

Tammy Downing says

A very interesting story about a CIA agent in 1961 Berlin who's trying to figure out what the Russians are up to. Along with way, he gets involved with a young man who's the leader of a resistance group.

Gene says

The Story of Henri Tod, I feel, is one of the more enjoyable of the Buckley spy novels I've read. The many subplots gradually merge to make an exciting climax to the story I was given a better knowledge of the crisis over Berlin and a better feel for the yearning for liberty that I often take for granted. One is easily drawn to sympathize with the suffering characters and to hope for their success, though deep-down one realizes that the restoration of freedom to East Berlin would in the end lag another 30+ years and that the novel will not have a happy ending. We can thankfully recognize that Berlin itself now has such an ending, thanks in no small part to conservatives like the author who stood athwart history and yelled, "Halt!"

Denise Kearney says

I Book-\$1.99-Early Bird Books A good book, but not one of Buckley's best. 3 1/2 stars

Bob says

Summary: As East Germany takes steps to stem the emigration of its people to the west through East Berlin in 1961, Blackford Oakes is tasked to find out what their intentions are and how they and Moscow will respond if NATO and the US intervenes.

After appearing weak and inexperienced in an initial meeting with Nikita Khrushchev President Kennedy learns that East Germany is taking steps to partition East and West Berlin to stem the tide of people emigrating from East to West Berlin and West Germany. This would violate agreements made at the end of World War II, and could trigger a new war, perhaps even a nuclear conflict between the US and the Soviet Union. CIA agent Blackford Oakes is tasked with getting critical intelligence to determine whether Berlin will be completely isolated from the West, and what the East will do if NATO responds.

Oakes key contact with East Berlin and the East Germans is Henri Tod. Tod leads a resistance organization

from West Berlin against the Communists. They call themselves The Bruderschaft and are not above violent efforts to subvert the Communists. He has become enemy Number One but has eluded capture. But the Communists have discovered an Achilles heel. Tod, whose real name was Toddweiss, was a German Jew, who along with his beloved sister Clementa, was shielded by the Wurmbrand family, when Jews were being sent to the death camps. They spirit him out of the country when he becomes draft-eligible. They pay with their lives and Clementa is sent to a camp to die. But she is liberated by Soviet troops, only to become their captive. Thought dead, she lives, and becomes the means to lure Tod and capture him, with Oakes being involved as an intermediary.

Meanwhile, East German leader Walter Ulbricht also has his own Achilles, a nephew Caspar, who he has taken under his wing as a personal assistant, perhaps to atone for killing his father. Caspar has discovered the rail car used by Hitler, abandoned in a rail yard, and turns it into a love nest for him and his girlfriend Claudia. Their paths cross with Tod when Tod is wounded after an assassination of an East German official and the rescue him from his pursuers, nursing him back to health in the rail car, and becoming converts to his cause and a source of critical information.

Blackford Oakes has all this to deal with, as he tries to get the needed intelligence to the President. How will he respond to the likely trap using Tod's sister? How will he work with the independent Tod and his rogue organization? How will they react to the intelligence they are passing along to Oakes? And what will the U.S. government do?

The book is a page turner, moving quickly between Kennedy, Khruschev and Ulbricht, Oakes and Tod, Caspar and Claudia. Perhaps the most fascinating element is the challenge of divining an enemy's intent and character, what action one should take, and how one's adversary will respond. Anyone who has studied this era realizes how easily things could have turned out otherwise than they did, a salutary lesson for our own day.
