

**COLD  
PROTOCOL**

ALSO BY DAVID BICKFORD

*KATYA*

*KATYA - The Informer*

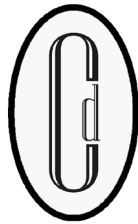
*KATYA - Arctic Betrayal*

*The Face of Tomorrow*

*Cold Protocol*

# COLD PROTOCOL

DAVID BICKFORD



Coinkydink



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To my loving wife Cary, co-author, co-conspirator – Amor Vincit.

“From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an  
iron curtain has descended across the continent”

- Winston Churchill.



CONFIDENTIAL

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BERLIN: INCIDENT REPORT

14. SUMMARY:

The height of the reeds on the Western bank and the unusual number of ice floes in the water obscured the view from Watchtower 4.

Our informants in the area have been contacted but no relevant intelligence has been forthcoming.

Whether or not the infiltration was successful remains therefore uncertain.

#1887

December 1979



~1~

The US Reconnaissance Vehicle burst over the hill in a barrage of blinding white snow.

Mike Peterson, Political Adviser to the US Military Government in Berlin slammed against the passenger door swearing.

‘Goddamit, Luke . . .’

The US Ranger grimaced, fought the wheel a moment.

‘Didn’t hear you complain when we were in ‘Nam, Mike.’ His voice raised above the whine of the overrevving engine.

The RV slid violently down an ice slope, slewing sideways to avoid a field gate. Mike hung on to a safety rail, his eye caught by a flock of startled black crows flying off to join their comrades circling in the smoke greyed sky above East Berlin.

Luke’s mouth turned down.

‘Still think going to meet this girl of yours is worth it?’

He sharpened his tone.

‘What do you see in her anyway for all this trouble?’

Mike didn’t reply. He was thinking of the day he had walked into the small Meissen shop tucked down a side street in East Berlin, and his eyes had met Helena’s.

‘Dammit, Mike, I’m serious. This girl is an East Berliner. Verboten. Off limits. What’s she got for you that any West Berliner hasn’t got?’

Mike looked across at a snow flurry drifting off a whitened hedge. The crows had reminded him how near East Berlin was, yet how far away was Helena, stranded behind the concrete Wall that divided the city.

Luke became angry. ‘You thought what’ll happen to me if I’m caught bringing the US Polad into East Germany on a military recce? You know damn well it’s

prohibited I've told you time and again. Haven't we got enough grief keeping the Russians out of West Berlin without some East Berlin girl smiling at you and I'm risking my life on an espionage charge?

Mike opened his mouth to reply but Luke hadn't finished.

'You need to concentrate your mind on that Russian Political Advisor. He's trouble.'

'Don't you think I know that? But she got to me, Luke. I have to see her.'

The RV juddered as the downslope hit a line of frozen plough furrows.

Luke revved the engine, the vehicle steadied.

'You keep coming over to see her like this and the East German Secret Police will find out and pick her up for sure. Every time I bring you over she's at risk . . . and goddamit so am I.'

Luke savagely changed gear, driving hard through a snowdrift, skirting a clump of trees, black-branched against the leaden sky.

'You know damn well what the Stasi bastards do to East German girls who fraternize with the West.'

Mike had spent two years in Berlin wading in the mire of Cold War politics. He knew very well what the Stasi did to those women. He also knew what their masters, the Russian KGB, did to them. Rape and torture were the least of it. He forced out the words, convincing himself as he said them.

'She's safe, she works in their Meissen shop selling porcelain, the Stasi only let people who've passed their vetting work in those shops.'

Luke looked straight at him. He was built powerfully. Men under his command didn't argue with that look.

'She'll wind up caged in some Russian labour camp if you don't get a grip and end it before . . .'

Mike's sudden shout cut like a buzzsaw, urgent, panicked.

'Back up, back up.'

A few hundred metres ahead an armed Russian Personnel Carrier was crossing their path. For a moment Luke froze, disbelieving the Red Star insignia branded against the carrier's dazzle paint.

'Shit, what the hell are they doing here? There's a Christmas truce . . .'

Training took over. Automatically, without thinking, Luke hit the brakes, ground into reverse. Cursed as the RV immediately slid helplessly on the snow. Battled uselessly to gain traction.

He grabbed a radio phone from the pocket of the vehicle, threw it at Mike.

'Get Blue Papa on the line. That carrier's meant to be in barracks.'

He revved the engine, pulled the wheel hard left as the four wheels bit, throwing up a cloud of powdered snow.

Mike smashed into the passenger door again, dropped the radio phone. He scrambled for it, swearing.

Luke didn't take his eyes off the carrier, shouted at Mike.

'Tell them a Russian Personnel Carrier's loose near . . . no belay that, just give our call sign.'

Mike's fingers brushed the phone on the floor; it slid away as the vehicle swung violently.

'Shit, I said get Blue Papa,' Luke yelled.

'I can't find the radio it's on the floor . . . get this damn thing steady can't you.'

Luke changed gear, straightened the vehicle. Mike grabbed the radio phone, pressed the send button.

'Blue Papa this is Zulu.'

Static from the phone.

He repeated, 'Blue Papa this is Zulu.'

Static.

Luke pulled up the handbrake, revved a churning turn, swallow-tailed, another blizzard of snow arcing away from the rear tyres.

Mike looked through the rear window. The carrier's eight wheels were flinging up snow, swinging towards them, its exhausts bursting out black smoke. The commander had his field glasses trained on the recce vehicle.

Mike double clicked the send button. 'Answer damn you . . . Blue Papa, come in Blue Papa, this . . .'

A high-pitched whistle burst from the radio.

' . . . is Zulu. Blue . . .'

Luke cut in.

'Forget it, the bastards are jamming us.'

He reached over, snatched the phone from Mike's hand, flung it onto the back seat. He glanced in the rearview mirror. It was steamed up. He frantically wiped his gloved hand across it. The carrier was lost in a swirl of snow.

'Find Blauholz, it's a wood to the north, there's a farm . . .'

Luke pulled out a map from his side door pocket, threw it at Mike.

Mike struggled to open the stiff folds of the map. He levered his seat back. Opened the first page. Saw the large-typed heading in red "East Germany-Reconnaissance."

Luke jabbed his fingers on the map.

'I haven't got all day . . . Blauholz. I want Blauholz . . . the farm.'

Mike creased a page in half, traced it with a finger. He stared at the compass above the windscreen trying to read it as the RV rolled and dived.

‘Steer bearing one three zero.’

Luke grunted, pulled the wheel right.

His rear-view mirror reflected the Russian carrier two fields back, on the move. It turned to the same bearing.



~2~

The Soviet Zil swept up the icy concrete drive towards the dark, brooding slab concrete building that housed the Headquarters of the Russian Military Government, Berlin.

The building lay in the centre of Potsdam, a town twenty-five kilometres from Berlin, built on the River Havel for the Prussian Kings in the seventeenth century as a picturesque pastoral dream. A dream wrecked by Allied bombing in World War Two and afterwards by Russian savagery in their occupation of East Germany.

The Headquarters air of deliberate menace was heightened by the deserted courtyard which echoed as the Zil's wheels crunched the icebound snow covering it. The only colour there was the red Russian flag posted over the square pillared front entrance, stiff as a board in the freezing cold.

Lev Leviaski, the Political Advisor to the Russian Military Government, climbed out of the Zil's rear seat and stood by the open door looking up at the flag. He never failed to feel a creeping chill at the sight of the flag. And, as the Political Adviser to a paranoid government, he never forgot that that chill was essential to remind him there was no room for the slightest miscalculation on his part. Buried here, in the depths of East Germany, he knew the war between communism and capitalism was physically demarked by the Berlin Wall separating East from West. He also knew that underneath that reality lurked a labyrinth where the political battle between East and West for ideological supremacy was fought each day. One political underestimation could lead to a physical confrontation one step away from nuclear catastrophe. Worse, any mistake by him would mean the inevitable KGB interrogation and a swift bullet.

He wrapped his coat tightly round him and walked under the flag to the steps. He took them two at a time. A sharp efficient gesture, as much to prepare him for the interview with General Andreyev as to show confidence to the hidden KGB security watchers.

The guards had retreated out of the cold courtyard to stand around the desk in the centre of the depressing reception hall, a massive grey area calculated to intimidate visitors. The gloom was enhanced only by the faint lighting. Electricity was in short supply, a point of continual dispute between the Russians and the East Germans who supplied it.

These thoughts were not in Lev's mind as he strode down the empty concrete walled corridor towards the General's office, his shoes echoing in the silence.

Nor did he dwell on the dim, naked bulbs hanging from the ceiling, or the dirty windows one side and the long line of numbered unpainted office doors on the other.

His thoughts were locked on the undisclosed reason why the General, Ivor Andreyev, Russian Commandant of East Berlin and the Russian Forces in East Germany, had demanded his immediate attendance. He had no obvious reason to fear the summons but fear it he did. That gnawing half doubt put there by years of innuendo, by the sudden disappearance of comrades in the nether world of Kremlin politics. And the silences that followed.

He stopped in front of the door facing him at the end of the corridor marked COMMANDANT. Gathering himself he knocked and entered immediately.

General Andreyev, short, authoritative with a taste for command, always wore full military uniform with rows of medal ribbons stretched across his broad chest. An overbearing, intimidating, Stalinist presence, he was standing behind a large mahogany desk shouting into a 'phone, red anger in his face lit by a single lamp under the Russian flag.

'What the fuck do you mean you lost them?'

No interest in the reply.

'Don't . . . you find them . . . get them before they cross the border.'

He slammed the receiver down, saw Lev.

'What do we do with these useless *arschloks* Moscow send us. Don't they have any decently trained soldiers anymore?'

Lev took off his coat, threw it nonchalantly on the chair in front of the desk. 'Berlin's quiet at the moment General, so Moscow sends us the rubbish they don't want. What's the problem?'

Andreyev started pacing up and down the room behind his desk, his face working. He stopped abruptly, looked at Lev.

'The Americans . . .'

He struggled to contain his temper.

‘. . . the Americans spotted one of our personnel carriers.’

Lev didn’t understand. He shook his head at Andreyev. ‘What personnel carrier? Our carriers are in barracks. We agreed a Christmas truce with the Americans . . . no American recces, no Russian manoeuvres.’

The General hesitated. This was delicate. He’d kept his polad out of what was going on. The wise course would have been to have told him earlier and then any mistake could have been put on the polad’s shoulders. Leviaski was one of the elites—a brilliant operator, ruthless. But Andreyev had never quite trusted him, never been able to quite fathom out the man in front of him. The tinge of red in his short dark hair spoke of the fiery temperament of loyalty and dedication. But the blue-grey eyes, they seemed to be depthless, like a deep hazardous pool—unpredictable—and then there was what had happened to his parents and grandparents . . .

Andreyev shrugged: it was no longer an option, now that he needed him. He lowered his voice.

‘A deception . . .’

Andreyev waved Lev to a dark brown leather chair, one of a group in the middle of the room. A conspiratorial gesture. He sat down and leaned towards him.

Lev immediately sensed danger. Andreyev was plotting and plotting to set the unwary onto a tightrope.

‘Understand this is top secret, for you only. We . . .’ Andreyev stopped there, probing his mind for what to say next.

Lev lifted his chin, widened his eyes. Waited. The silence went on. He found an innocuous question to ask.

‘Who was doing the recce?’

Andreyev was jerked back into the present. ‘I told you, the Americans.’

‘I mean which American? I know many of them.’

‘How the hell do I know. You’re my Polad, you deal with the Americans in West Berlin, so you find out who was out there. I want you at Checkpoint Bravo when they come in and I want them taken out.’

‘You mean you want me to make a protest.’

‘No. I mean I want you to make sure they don’t get back to the West. Make them disappear.’

Andreyev sat back in the chair, breathing heavily.

Lev was appalled. Americans on a Flag Tour Recce was not top secret, even if they were out in the field during a truce. Andreyev had been about to tell him what was so secret but had changed his mind. Why? As the Russian Political Advisor, he was privy to all secrets in Berlin. Otherwise, he couldn’t operate in the maze of

intrigue the Americans, British and French Allies created to keep Berlin under their protection. And Andreyev was ordering him to take out the Americans . . .? It was insane.

‘I need to know why I’m given this instruction, General . . . you were about to induct me into some new intelligence?’

Andreyev snarled at him. ‘Just do it, Leviaski. Understand?’

Lev waited for more. But Andreyev looked away, dismissing him.

Lev stood up, gathered his coat. Silently left the room and the building.

Sergei, Lev’s driver, didn’t get out of the Zil at Lev’s approach. He sat quietly in the driver’s seat, engine idling, illicitly smoking a cigarette, an American Lucky Strike.

They had known each other many years and Lev had made it clear that Sergei’s driving skills made him an equal to be respected. And in that lay one reason for their friendship.

Lev flung himself into the back seat.

‘West Berlin, Sergei, Checkpoint Bravo. Fast.’

The car was soon clear of Potsdam, speeding along the desolate, uncleared autobahn siren blaring, wheels spurting slush, yellow headlamps in the gloom highlighting the loose snow on the empty road. The winter white landscape was deserted.

Sergei waited until he was into the rhythm of driving at high speed on the snow packed road surface. He minutely adjusted the rear-view mirror to look at Lev, wanting to speak, then saw Lev’s expression and backed off. A few minutes passed. A road sign flashed by: Berlin 5 km. There wasn’t much time before he lost the opportunity to talk. His eyes went back to the mirror.

‘General Andreyev’s driver told me.’

Lev met Sergei’s eyes in the mirror. Sergei always picked up the rumours that showed soldiers often knew more than their officers. Here might be the answer to Andreyev’s sudden change of mind, his bizarre order to eliminate the Americans. Lev’s eyes told Sergei he wasn’t interested in what General Andreyev’s driver had to say. But Sergei knew him too well to be put off.

‘He said the Americans had seen one of our personnel carriers on manoeuvres.’

Disinterestedly, Lev took an Abdullah cigarette out of its packet. Lit it, waving the smoke away. ‘Is that all?’

‘Well, it’s a Christmas truce, I wondered what it’s all about?’

Lev looked out at the bleak, flat, frozen landscape now passing in a blur as Sergei accelerated. What the hell was it that Andreyev wasn’t telling him?



~3~

Mike was struggling to read the map in the wildly gyrating recce vehicle, glancing back every few minutes to see where the Russian Carrier was. However much he urged Luke on, the carrier stayed stubbornly three or four fields behind them. They were now five kilometres west of Blauholz Farm, seesawing up a steep, lightly dusted snow field. Ten minutes travelling time, unless Luke miscalculated—hit a hedge or ditch—then the Russians would be all over them.

There was another, more pressing problem. He turned to Luke, held up the map. ‘The autobahn cuts right across this area, about six kilometres from here. If we don’t lose that bastard soon, we’ll be trapped.’

Luke grunted. Changed gear to smash through a wooden gate at the top of the hill. The vehicle dipped violently down a precipitous slope at the bottom of which Mike saw a dark impenetrable pine forest spread right across their path. He was too shocked to speak.

Luke continued the headlong rush. Without warning a path opened up through the trees. Mike braced for the inevitable crash—it was too narrow. They slid through, juddering on the exposed tree roots.

Luke slammed on the brakes, slowed down, twisting the steering wheel this way and that to avoid the trees. ‘We’ll be OK now,’ he said, laconic. ‘That carrier’s too wide to get through—it’ll take them at least an hour to skirt this lot.’ He accelerated. ‘But we need to move on in case they have someone they can radio up ahead. Put the map away, I know this forest like the back of my hand.’

‘Nice of you to have told me before I had a heart attack.’ But Mike’s words were lost as Luke put all his mind to avoiding the trees.

Fifteen minutes later the forest ended, and Mike saw ahead an old stone walled, tiled-roof farmhouse. The buildings formed a square and it had probably once been fortified. Luke drove the vehicle through a large stone archway into a central courtyard.

In less than a minute men and women in farm clothes appeared. Two men unlocked the doors to a hay barn while a woman opened the driver's door, gestured to Luke and Mike to get out. She drove the vehicle straight into the barn where Mike last saw it disappearing downwards on a lift. Another woman ushered Mike and Luke to an adjoining barn where a Chevrolet V8 Sedan was emerging from beneath the straw scattered floor on another lift. Within seconds Luke was behind the wheel, starting up the engine. Mike was still closing his passenger door as Luke drove the Chevy straight out of the farm onto a side road.

As they left, Mike saw a couple of tractors already erasing all the tyre marks of the recce vehicle. The whole vehicle change had taken less than three minutes. He knew he'd never witness a slicker safe house operation.

A few minutes later, Luke parked the Chevy on the verge of the side road, hidden from the lonely autobahn directly in front of them. Crossing East Germany from Berlin to West Germany, it was the road link for US personnel and the Russians controlled it.

Ahead of them was a signpost. There was no mention of West Germany, a stark reminder that the Russians prohibited any reference to it. It also reminded Mike that the Russians ruthlessly patrolled the border, shooting escapees trying to reach the West. And he was an illegal civilian. The longer they waited the more likely it was that the Carrier Commander had warned his HQ of the recce vehicle. But they had to wait here to make sure they weren't seen entering the autobahn from the side road leading back to Blauholz.

They listened intently for the noise of any vehicles passing by. The silence was broken only by the faint hiss of wind over the snow which swept across the high white frosted hedges bent overhead. Luke put the Chevy into gear.

A faint spluttering crackling sound drifted from the West. They both tensed, trying to identify the noise. It receded and then became louder. Was it another carrier on the lookout for them? Luke swiftly engaged reverse, turned to look through the rear window.

Mike slapped his hand on the gear lever. 'Wait up, I think . . .'

A cloud of black smoke slowly drifted across their front, enveloping a chugging square box on wheels. The most unreliable car in the world, an East German Trabant. Unaffectionately known as the Trabbie, it spluttered past, going East, spewing oily

exhaust fumes that enveloped the vehicle's lurching progress. The driver could see nothing behind him.

Luke yanked the gear lever to drive, felt the rear wheels bite on the hard-packed snow. 'OK we're for Checkpoint Bravo.'

They swung out onto the Autobahn, driving through the grey slush that was lined by chunks of ice, painted a slate colour by the diesel fumes of the traffic; a silent commentary on the rawness of the diesel pollution belched out by the desultory, infrequent journeys of East German and Russian trucks and cars along it.

Luke controlled the slide as the Chevy's rear end protested at the sudden change of direction.

'This bloody vehicle's a pig. What idiot dreamed up a Chevy Sedan as a getaway car.'

He flung a hard look at Mike.

'This is the last time I'm bringing you over to see that girl.'

'You know Rogers in B squadron.'

'That bastard's always giving women strife—'

'He was hassling her when I first went into the shop; half-cut as usual and I had to throw him out.'

'So she was grateful.' There was a laugh behind Luke's voice.

Mike ignored him. It was much more than that—an instant electricity and now she would be frantic when she realised he wasn't coming.

The Chevy's engine faltered. Luke and Mike froze, looking automatically at the long-nosed hood housing the V8 engine as if this would cure the problem. Luke juggled the accelerator.

'Goddamn cheap Russian gasoline. If we stop now . . .'

The engine picked up. Luke settled back in his seat. Kept his foot on the throttle. A small wooden bodied East German truck appeared in front of them. Luke slowed.

'I'll keep behind this, we won't look so conspicuous.'

Mike nodded.

Luke waited until he had tucked the Chevy in behind the truck's black diesel fumes, then looked over at Mike.

'What the hell was that carrier doing there?'

Mike shrugged. 'No idea.'

'That all you can say? We nearly got aced. Hell, you told me the Russians had agreed to stop all carrier and tank movements over Christmas.'

'They did.'

The engine coughed violently. Luke kicked the accelerator, nothing changed, he kicked it frantically, the rhythm settled again.

The East German truck suddenly turned off into a hidden snow-laden lane, leaving no other vehicle in sight. Luke took his hand off the wheel, massaged his eyes, looked ahead at the empty autobahn.

‘That’s left us wide open. I tell you we’re in deep shit if we’re picked up.’

‘We’ve been in worse.’

‘It was different in ‘Nam,’ Luke growled. ‘We could fight back.’

Mike thought back to the time he and Luke had served as Rangers in Vietnam, clearing tunnels of VC. Desperate, dirty work done by men like themselves, rangy, quick witted, decisive. After his last tour Mike knew he’d done enough killing and had joined the Foreign Service. He’d been posted to Berlin and was now doing a different sort of desperate, dirty work—in the dark tunnels of the Soviet conspiracy to dominate the West.

‘The only difference Luke is your driving’s got worse.’

Behind them came the wailing sound of a siren. Alarmed, they looked into their rear-view mirrors. A Russian Zil filled them, red lights flashing, a red flag streaming from the hood whip. It was travelling at a crazy speed, spray flying from its wheels in twin blurred arcs. In seconds it drew alongside the Chevy.

Mike looked over at it. He glimpsed the lone passenger swaying in the back seat. Briefly their eyes met. The Zil sped past splashing the Chevy with pellets of filthy ice. Mike was stunned.

‘Shit, Lev Leviaski.’

Luke pulled back in alarm.

‘What, the Russian polad? Thanks. That’s all we need.’

They watched the Zil career away up the road, marked by the jet of grey slush streaming behind.

Luke glanced at Mike.

‘Did he see you . . . recognise you?’

Mike didn’t avoid the obvious. ‘Yes,’ he said baldly.

‘Are you sure?’

‘I meet Lev almost every day—usually about trouble the Russians have stirred up; shootings on the border, closing down our flights from West Germany, he’s a devious bastard but I can counter every move he makes—so don’t accuse me of underestimating him.’

‘Shit, if you know him that well, then he knows you too . . . and he’ll know about that goddamn girl. I tell you we’re in deep shit.’

A signpost announced in three languages that Checkpoint Bravo, the entry to the American Sector of West Berlin, was one kilometre ahead.

‘Leave Leviaski to me, Luke.’

Luke grunted, braked the Chevy and slowed in front of a large sign with messages in Russian, English and French.

‘OK Mike. Checkpoint Bravo. I just hope you’ve got a good story.’

A searchlight stabbed through the murky evening twilight, bouncing onto the Chevy. Luke kept the vehicle travelling in low gear. The blinding beam clung on, then flooded in front of them to reveal four heavily armed, grey-coated Russian soldiers manning a concrete checkpoint hut. Alongside it, a red-and-white painted metal barrier stretched across the road.

Mike reminded himself of what this checkpoint actually meant. How the division of West and East had been so chillingly achieved. How the Russians kept the flame of communism alive in a desolate, soul-destroying regime of oppression. Epitomised by what he saw here.

He deliberately took in the scene.

Stretching from both sides of the hut into the bleakness of the distance loomed a twenty-foot-high rusted heavy chain-link fence. It was menacing enough but, to reinforce the message the Russians had erected tall concrete Gooney Towers out of which poked matt black machine guns, their staple ultimate deterrent, if nuclear weapons were discounted. This was the cage the Russians used to keep their citizens trapped in East Germany under a communist regime that most of the inhabitants despised and feared.

Mike then took in the area beyond, known as the killing ground. The Guards’ ability to kill anyone attempting to escape was enhanced by the flat hundred-foot sand-covered wasteland which lay between the fence and another wall. This was the Berlin Wall, famous or, Mike thought, infamous depending on your political persuasion. A grey concrete slab, fifteen feet high, topped by barb-wired pipe, dominated by another line of Gooney Tower machine guns. It was a killing ground that lived up to its name. Frequently.