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Advocate and Activist: MEMOIRS OF AN AMERICAN COMMUNIST LAWYER

John Abt, Michael Myerson
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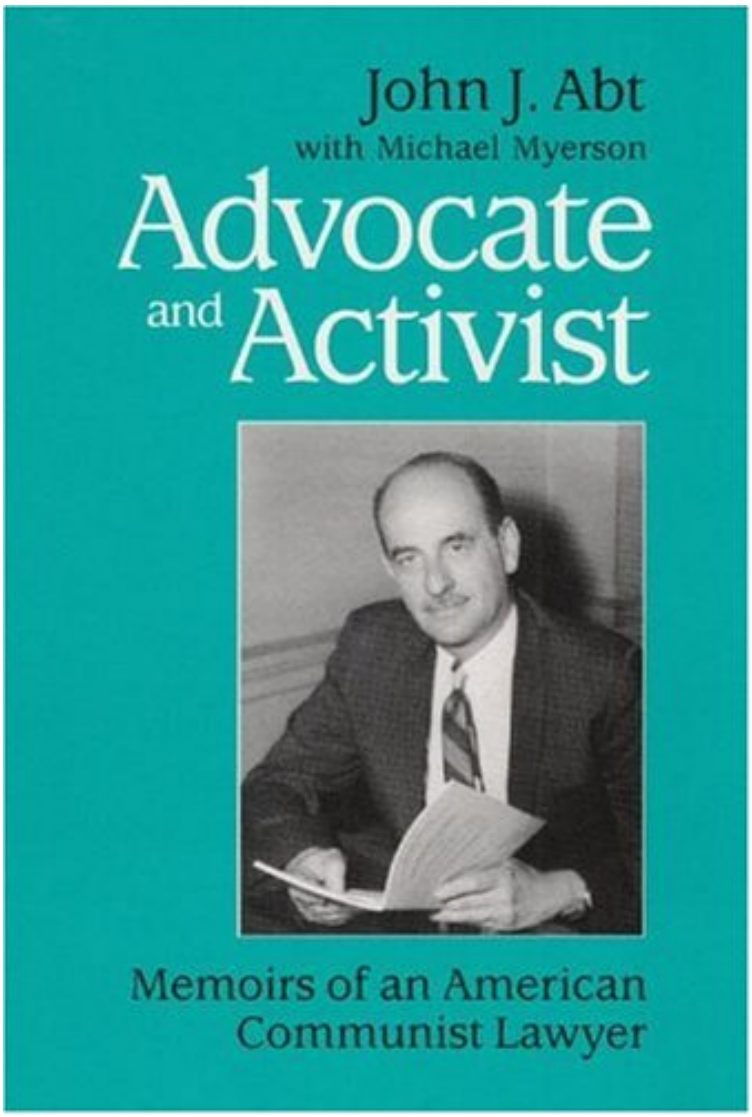

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John Abt, Michael Myerson : Advocate and Activist: MEMOIRS OF AN AMERICAN COMMUNIST LAWYER before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Advocate and Activist: MEMOIRS OF AN AMERICAN COMMUNIST LAWYER:

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Memoirs of the Counsel for the Communist Party USABy Sean MulliganMany people said that with his respectable family background and fine legal mind, that if Abt had retreated

from his principles and became a dissilutioned former Communist liberal, he could have risen far in the federal judiciary, even to the Supreme Court. Instead he dedicated himself to being a labor lawyer and a lawyer for the Communist Party USA, when during the McCarthy Era even most liberals and civil libertarians were afraid to represent Communists.Abt, discusses his upbringing and how he became politically conscious during the Great Depression. Abt was a part of a group of Communists who were Federal employees led by Harold Ware. Abt denies that the characterization of the group as a spy ring, noting that they didn't have the security classification system that they have today and that none of the AAA documents he had access to involved national security.Abt tells of the many popular struggles he was involved in over the years, such as the Civil Rights Movement, Henry Wallaces 1948 Presidential Campaign and the Anti-War Movement. Abt, talks about the many fine people he knew in the CPUSA while commenting on the mistakes that the Communist Party made over the years.10 of 21 people found the following review helpful. 300 pages of nothingBy Stephen M. St OngeJohn Abt lived one of the more interesting lives of the twentieth century. As a secret member of the Communist Party and espionage agent, he could tell a whale of a story. As someone who watched the rise and fall of American and Soviet Communism, he might reflect on what happened, and why a movement that once looked so succesful fell apart. If nothing else, he might at least have told some interesting lies.He doesn't.Instead, he spends over three hundred pages carefully avoiding the main themes of his life: what he really did as a Communist, why he felt it necessary to conceal his membership in the Party, what it was like inside the Party, and what, if anything, he learned from it all.The advanced student of communist propoganda will learn a few things, and those who know of Abt from Elizabeth Bentley's and Whittaker Chambers memoirs, the Venona decrypts, and other sources can glean a few interesting facts here and there, but mostly, Abt says nothing about himself, his life, his movement, or his century, and takes three hundred pages to avoid saying it.A wasted life, and a waste of money. Don't buy it.9 of 26 people found the following review helpful. Propaganda by an Espionage AgentBy A CustomerJohn Abt's autobiography follows the distinctive pattern set over the years by similar Communist dissimulations in print. That is, his smooth lies are very much like those of Ring Lardner, Jr., Lillian Hellman, Alger Hiss, Dorothy Healey, Vladimir Posner, Armand Hammer, Emmanuel Fried, and a devil's host of others. Abt's life 'explained' is an exercise in 1) that which he does NOT explain, 2) attempts at outright Soviet Agitprop, and 3) a profound anti-Americanism. Abt was one of a rather large number of 'secret' party members. In his case, secret for 50 years (he 'came out' at his 80th birthday party). Truly a man who lived a lie all of his adult life. Along with "fellow travelers" ("Sputniki", from the Russian of Trotsky's political term), the Communist movement set out to destroy America by "any means possible". Then to deliver it to the Lenin-Stalin-Khrushchev-Bresznev regime - the largest mass murder machine in human history. (See: "The Black Book of Communism", elsewhere on .Com). Abt mumbles on about the "Marxist study group" he belonged to in the1930's, which included Alger Hiss and several other Soviet espionage agents. After the Whittaker Chambers defection affair, Abt, not himself a 'source', became eventually its head, turning the ring over to the NKVD (in '44), later called the "Perlo Group". The group's members, were denounced by Perlo's ex-wife, who named Abt as an espionage agent. (see the "Venona" transcripts elsewhere on .Com for Abt as a spy) Abt mentions many other communists and fellow travelers (carefully, sure that they had been already identified elsewhere) in this autobiography completed after his death in '91. All these should be of interest to anyone interested in friends of Stalin, from Pete Seeger to Studs Terkel. He is very obtuse about other friends, as is his co-author Michael Myerson about himself, a guy who writes for 'various publications', ' organizes political campaigns', 'teaches in NYC', had been "a National Director of a Peace Organization" (all unamed), ie., Myerson is a cypher. But Abt's agitprop work must be read with great care. Do keep in mind that the CPUSA (and Abt) was wholly controlled by the Soviet butchers from Moscow. Abt's legal career is a sort of ultimate dark lawyer joke. Published by the U. of Illinois (what could they have been thinking?). Minus 5 stars and therefore recommended for that very reason.

Best known as the longtime chief counsel to the Communist Party of the United States, John Abt also was one of Angela Davis's first attorneys and the man Lee Harvey Oswald wanted to defend him after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. In Advocate and Activist, John Abt and Michael Myerson provide a detailed account of a life that touched and was touched by the labor and left-wing political movements in the United States for nearly sixty years. Abt went to Washington, D.C., in the early 1930s to join the New Deal. He worked in a succession of government posts and for the LaFollette Civil Liberties Committee. He was Sidney Hillman's counsel in the labor movement and a top aide to Henry Wallace's 1948 presidential campaign. At the height of McCarthyism he became the Communist party's chief counsel. Defending the party in the Smith Act and McCarran Act prosecutions, he succeeded at dismantling the acts piece by piece, establishing precedents and making sure that being a Communist was not illegal.

"A fascinating and illuminating account of his legal career... He has also produced a charming, warm-hearted memoir." -- Peter Irons.