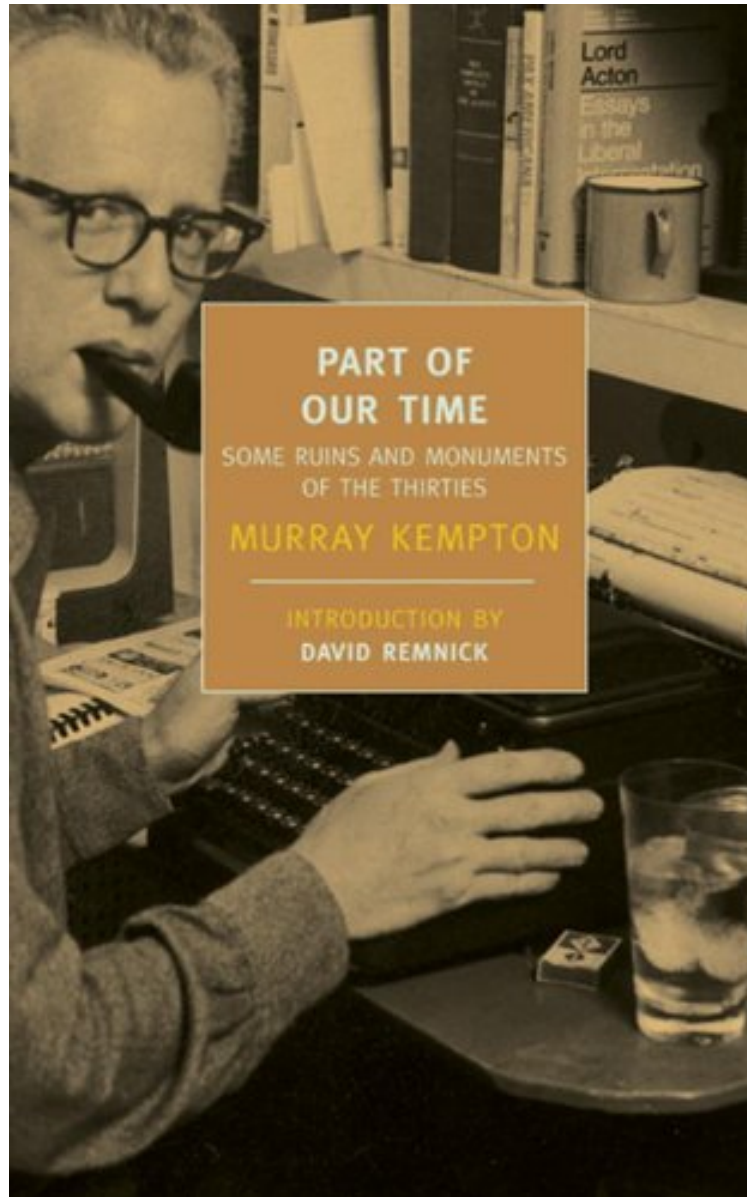


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Part of Our Time: Some Ruins and Monuments of the Thirties

Murray Kempton

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Murray Kempton : Part of Our Time: Some Ruins and Monuments of the Thirties before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Part of Our Time: Some Ruins and Monuments of the Thirties:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A great discovery.By RB SoulFulfilling, rich writing. A great discovery.4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. The High Art of ReportingBy ilprofessoreMurray

Kempton, the reporter's reporter--he hated being called a journalist--was born into the genteel environment of Baltimore, the city that also gave us Alger Hiss and Whittaker Chambers, two personages of the past whose intertwining lives in many ways epitomize the sorry history of Communism in America. If history is usually told by its heroes, Kempton chooses more often than not to describe its misfits and flops, the now forgotten little men and women, some noble, others deluded, who joined a then popular cause and were often destroyed later on for doing so. This is a true chronicle of the times, no better book has ever been written about a period that so many of its victims chose to forget or, in embarrassment, shovel under the carpet. Kempton has no axe to grind; he wants us to see what it was, and why it was. This is more than superb reporting, it is reporting as a high art. 18 of 19 people found the following review helpful. Essential reading to understanding Communism in the U.S. By aortoPicked this one up through reference in a biography dictionary on Communism in the United States. Glad I did. This is a hidden gem. Mr. Kempton does not approach the issue from a philosophical or principle oriented point of view. He doesn't discuss Communism and its ideals or compare and contrast various belief systems. He approaches it from a personal standpoint. He takes several peripheral characters, for the most part, and unfolds their lives. Apparently, he himself was involved in ascending into the Communist camp for a time. Rather than deal with the major players, he deals with minor players (minor, to me anyhow, as I'd never heard of many of them). This is what makes it interesting. By delving into the lives of these characters, he puts the times into a greater context by which we come to understand the appeal of Communism and its part in the broader scope of the 1920s and 1930s. Labor unrest, the Communist thread, the radicalism during this period and the economic devastation is something we seem to be one step removed from these days and the impact this period of time had on people is often lost. It's amazing how much what is said in this book rings true today. Truly history repeats itself. Not only do we begin to understand the times but we begin to see how diverse and different those who decided to take up its banner really were and how Communism was not necessarily the direct appeal but it was a means to an end, a reaction rather than proaction. He is sympathetic towards his characters and you feel the pathos as you read about their lives. They become very human and very real, something often lacking in history books. There is a tinge of sadness surrounding all the individuals in the book. His writing style is quite fresh and dramatic with a flair for the metaphor. If you wish to understand what was going on during this period of time and what the appeal of Communism was and why these individuals jumped on the bandwagon, this book is a must read.

Through brilliant portraits of real persons who created the myths and realities of the 1930s, the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Murray Kempton brings that turbulent decade to life. Himself a child of the time, Kempton examines with the insight and imagination of a novelist the men and women who embraced, grappled with, and in many cases were destroyed by the myth of revolution. What he calls the "ruins and monuments of the Thirties" include Paul Robeson, Alger Hiss, and Whittaker Chambers, the Hollywood Ten, the rebel women Elizabeth Bentley and Mary Heaton Vorse, and the labor leaders Walter Reuther and Joe Curran.