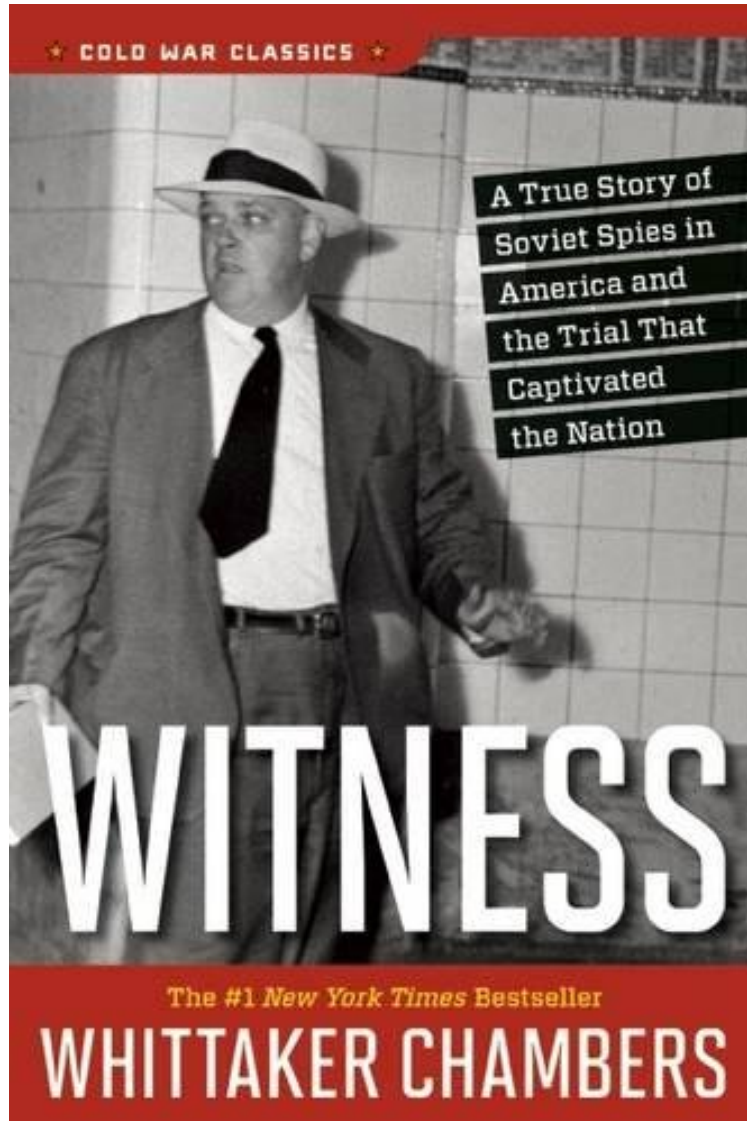


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## Witness (Cold War Classics)

*Whittaker Chambers*

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**Whittaker Chambers : Witness (Cold War Classics)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Witness (Cold War Classics):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Long, a few gaps, but still indispensableBy Tim WOne one hand, Chambers is clearly a good writer -- and knowledge of what he went through is indispensable for understanding, in part, how our nation has arrived where it is today. On the other hand, I keep feeling "Witness" could be a bit more to-the-point (770 pages!), and, more importantly, I feel like he doesn't bother to explain his main reason for being

attracted to Communism: Chambers speaks often of "the crisis" of the 20th century; in his view, Communism was the only hope of solving it. But which crisis is that? Industrialization? The Great Depression? Alienation? Hasn't every era had its own particular challenges? (The Romans had more slaves than citizens; Medieval Europe had the black death; oppression, grinding poverty, and biting vermin have been the global historical norm...) Perhaps, during the 30s-50s, a belief society itself was going to be destroyed by a crisis -- which only Communism could solve -- was so common he didn't bother to explain it (like the proverbial fish in water), but reading him from my vantage point in the early 21st century (post Reagan, et al -- where it seems that the worst crisis of the 20th century was Communism, itself), I'm a bit baffled as to which specific aspect he found so promising. As the title indicates, Chambers ultimately decides that Communism is inherently evil (in his view, the Soviet purges weren't a deviation from it; rather they were predicted by Marx rationally justified (necessitated, even) by Marxism's premises) and breaks with it - but he never concludes it "doesn't work" -- to the contrary, he believes he's joining the "losing" side. (And, perhaps later than he expected, he may yet still be right...) The story still holds up, but it would have helped a lot if he'd informed the reader a bit more about the specific \*pragmatic\* reasons which caused him to become a Communist in the first place. Nonetheless, I'd still recommend this, up there with Thomas Sowell's "Basic Economics" and Rodney Stark's various historical works. If you're a conservative, this explains a lot about how we moved from the classic liberalism in US history to today's ethos -- many of the things Chambers sees and hears (particularly with regard to newsroom bias and suppression) sound strikingly familiar to what's going on today. (For example, he noted that the wealthy, not the working class, were most attracted to Marxist ideas... precisely the opposite of what Marx predicted, but precisely what we see today, still.) If you're on the left side of the spectrum, I'd first commend you for actually being open-minded enough to consider reading from "the other side" (I've read enough left-wing political stuff to fill bookshelves), and probably recommend the other two before this one -- unless you're strongly concerned about the purported evils of 1950s anti-communism. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Lucid writer By M. Davis If nothing else, *Witness* is an elegantly written time capsule of the tumult in the world following the 20th Century's two great wars, written from an individual's perspective of his life within the greater struggle between Communism and Capitalism. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. The Best Book I Have Ever Read By Gregg GI I love reading history and biographies, I have read hundreds of books and this book is simply the best book I have ever read.

#1 New York Times bestseller for 13 consecutive weeks! First published in 1952, *Witness* is the true story of Soviet spies in America and the trial that captivated a nation. Part literary effort, part philosophical treatise, this intriguing autobiography recounts the famous Alger Hiss case and reveals much more. Chambers' worldview and his belief that "man without mysticism is a monster" went on to help make political conservatism a national force. Regnery History's Cold War Classics edition is the most comprehensive version of *Witness* ever published, featuring forewords collected from all previous editions, including discussions from luminaries William F. Buckley Jr., Robert D. Novak, Milton Hindus, and Alfred S. Regnery.

.com First published in 1952, *Witness* was at once a literary effort, a philosophical treatise, and a bestseller. Whittaker Chambers had just participated in America's trial of the century in which Chambers claimed that Alger Hiss, a full-standing member of the political establishment, was a spy for the Soviet Union. This poetic autobiography recounts the famous case, but also reveals much more. Chambers' worldview--e.g. quote;man without mysticism is a monsterquote;--went on to help make political conservatism a national force. Whittaker Chambers has written one of the really significant American autobiographies...penetrating and terrible insights into America in the early twentieth century. -- Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.