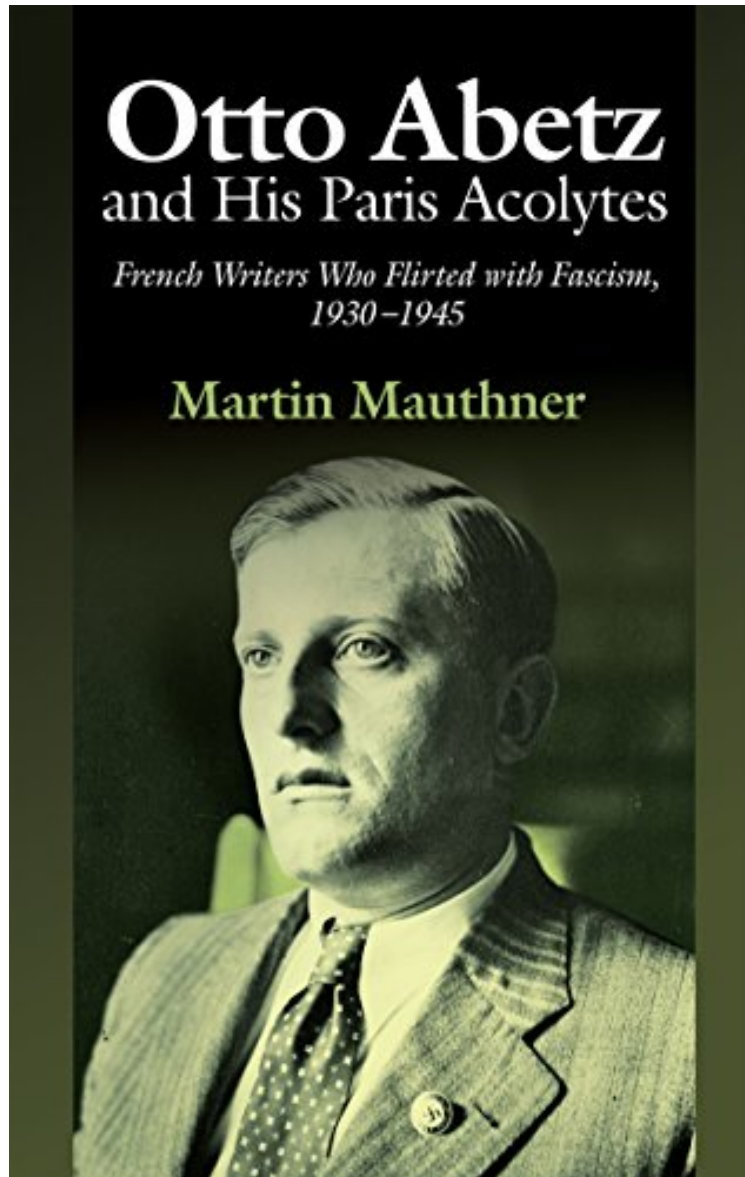


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Otto Abetz and His Paris Acolytes: French Writers Who Flirted with Fascism, 1930-1945

Martin Mauthner

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Otto Abetz and His Paris Acolytes: French Writers Who Flirted with Fascism, 1930–1945:

Before Hitler came to power, Otto Abetz was a left-wing Francophile teacher in provincial Germany, mobilising young French and German idealists to work together for peace through Franco-German reconciliation and a united Europe. Abetz married a French girl but, after 1933, succumbed to the Nazi sirens. Ribbentrop recruited him as his expert on France, tasking him with soothing the nervous French as Hitler turned Germany into a war machine. Abetz built up a network of opinion-moulding French men and women who admired the Nazis and detested the Bolsheviks, and he encouraged them to use their pens to highlight Hitler's triumphs. In 1939, France expelled Abetz as a Nazi agent but the following year he returned in triumph with the German army as an ambassador in Paris, appointed by Hitler. During the war, Abetz (apart from 'securing' works of art and playing a role in the deportation of Jews) manoeuvred three of his French publicist friends—Jean Luchaire, Fernand de Brinon, Drieu la Rochelle—into key positions from where they could laud Nazi achievements and denigrate the Resistance. A prime question the author addresses is why these writers and two others, Jules Romains and Bertrand de Jouvenel (all of whom had close Jewish family connections) supported the Nazi ideology. At the war's end, Drieu committed suicide, while Luchaire and Brinon were tried and executed as traitors. Abetz, charged with war crimes, pleaded that he saved France from being 'Polonized,' but a French court found him guilty and imprisoned him. He was released early but died in a mysterious car crash—a saboteur being suspected of having tampered with the steering. [Subject: Literature, Politics, Fascism]

About the Author After graduating from Wadham College, Oxford, Martin Mauthner assisted Randolph Churchill with his biography of Anthony Eden and the first volume of Randolph's life of Sir Winston. Martin's later career was as a senior information official of the European Union. His work involved public speaking, radio and television interviews, and organizing exhibitions. The late Sir Martin Gilbert said of Martin's *German Writers in French Exile, 1933–1940* (2007), "He uncovers a lost era in European literary history, and brings it powerfully to life; a magnificent depiction of remarkable individuals, their tribulations and their creativity." After graduating from Wadham College, Oxford, Martin Mauthner assisted Randolph Churchill with his biography of Anthony Eden and the first volume of Randolph's life of Sir Winston. Martin's later career was as a senior information official of the European Union.