

March 10, 1975

Dear Harold Weisberg,

I'm sorry it took me so long to reply to your helpful letter. I've gotten bogged down in my teaching work and have been really pressed for time. But I do greatly appreciate your willingness to share your very extensive knowledge with me.

Let me respond to the points you raised in order:

I didn't know of Debevoise's CIA involvement -- it's undoubtedly him, since he was the only lawyer by that name in NY. But his firm only represented Hiss at the beginning of the case and I doubt there was any relation with the CIA that affected the case, although you never know.

Weinstein has not yet won his case; he did win a judgement, but the FBI stalled until the FOIA amendments took effect on Feb. 19 -- he recently took depositions from the FBI agents on the FOI staff in the Bureau, which he said he'll give me when they are transcribed, which should be soon, and I'll be glad to send you copies.

I agree about the possibility of damage to innocent people if the FBI and HUAC files are opened indiscriminately. I've written ~~my~~ to Kastenmeier and Drinan on the Judiciary Committee asking for access to the Hiss files and they replied favorably, and I've also written John Doar, who is drawing up guidelines for Rodino on use of the HUAC files, suggesting that they be opened only on application of the person affected, or if someone is deceased, only if the Judiciary committee votes to open them in a case of historical significance.

I've also requested, under the FOIA, several things from the FBI, including the documents relating to the typewriter and the microfilms, and also direct access to the microfilms. Steve Salant, who's done most of the work on the microfilms, is convinced they were phony and probably manufactured in 1946 or 1947, which was discovered and then covered up.

Doering finally answered me, in generalities which evaded the question of whether Schmahl had any connection with Donovan; he merely said that no one in the law firm was involved in the case. So I wrote him back, restating my question, but haven't got an answer. I really don't expect anything significant from that.

I understand your point about my line of reasoning being simplistic and my context being too restrictive. And I agree that Hiss was not unique -- in fact, I think they would have preferred Harry White as a target had he not died. However, right now I am primarily interested in the Hiss case by itself -- later I hope to branch out (if we "solve" the Hiss case I'd like to work on the White case next). I also agree that far more than the China Lobby was involved, including Hoover and the FBI, the congressional "wild men" and military people. But I do think that Kohlberg, Levine

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and the China Lobby people were the driving force behind the Hiss case, although they perhaps utilized the FBI and others to frame the case. Levine is probably the key, although he is very cagy and didn't tell me anything significant, except to say that Chambers was a pathological liar. I agree that Chambers was a psychopath, which the people who used him knew (and which scared them to death) but they had to use him since he was their only direct link to Hiss. I've requested the documents on his crucial FBI interview the day after he turned over the Pumpkin Papers, which might reveal a lot if I get them.

I am working on the question as to who could have had access to the papers -- I thin Mandel is the one who got them, when he worked in the State Dept security staff. One question is, why were the papers dated in early 1938, when they would have trouble (which they barely avoided getting trapped on) showing that Chambers could have received them, since he had probably gone to Florida before the dates on the last documents? It would have been much easier ~~xx~~ using documents from 1937 or earlier. I don't know the answer to this.

I wish I knew what it is you have confidential knowledge about regarding Chambers. I can only guess that it might be either 1) a reference to his homosexuality and the possibility that the Hiss defense didn't raise this because there was some evidence that could have been introduced implicating Hiss in this; or 2) that Chambers had been involved with Nazis, which I think is quite possible. But I don't know. It might also be that even though Hiss was framed on the specific charges, he had been in the CP and that this was known to the FBI through its infiltration of the Party. At any rate, I think the Hiss defense in both trials was terrible.

I was fascinated by the transcript of the Warren Commission you sent me (and I'm enclosing a check to help your printing costs). However, I think the context of the Dulles quote about Hiss makes it not too useful, since I read it as Dulles referring to the Soviets providing blackmail insurance by giving gifts to their sources. But it is interesting.

Right now I'm waiting for several things, especially the response to my FOIA requests, which should come within two weeks. I'll let you know how they turn out. I'm also waiting to learn if Jim Bishop was able to ask Schmahl the questions I sent him. Schmahl told Bishop he would answer questions -- Bishop is a right-winger but seems to be willing to help in approaching Schmahl. Since Schmahl won't deal with me or Hiss anymore, Bishop is our only resort now, although if that doesn't pan out I'll try something more direct.

I hope you find the enclosed article on the FBI interesting -- the source was Bill Sullivan, although this isn't for attribution. He told me a lot of interesting things, some of them new, and what he said about the Hiss case was significant, since he had first-hand knowledge, having worked on the case.

Thanks again for your help. I'd love to visit you, but it probably won't be until late spring or early summer, since I'm so tied up here.

*Best, Peter Lewis*