THE WASHINGTON POST

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1992 A23

Cold War Case Closed

case, which resulted in Hiss's conviction in and America's leading Cold War criminal In August of this year, Alger Hiss wrote to Dmitry A. Volkogonov, chairman of the the Russian Federation's Commission for spied for the Soviet Union in the 1930s. ments about himself, Whittaker Chambers mittee Archives. Hiss requested all docuthe Accession of KGB and Central Com-1950 on perjury charges for denying he had

in the process. Yevgeny Primakov, director of the ror-eign Intelligence Service of the Russian search personally, and he also enlisted rederation, and a small army of archivists Volkogonov agreed to undertake the

to travel to Moscow, he needed someone to act in his stead. As director of the Nation Institute's Cold War Archives Prothat person. film about the case ("The Trials of Alger Hiss") and a longtime friend of Hiss, I was ect, producer-director of a documentary Because Hiss is 88 years old and unable

Volkogonov in his office, where he read from his findings, handed me his report and said that "the heavy weight should be lifted from [Hise's] heart " On Oct. 15, Volkogonov presented me with his official report: Not a single docu-ment implicates Alger Hiss, and Hiss was lifted from [Hiss's] heart never a spy for the Soviet Union. I filmed

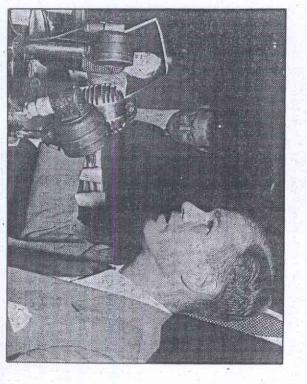
public all the files on Hiss, gonov and called on the general "to make the Washington Times [Nov. 2] that the jurors in the case count more than Volkotioned "the amazing speed with which some Writing in your paper Allen Weinstein, whose thesis is that Hiss was guilty, ques-[op-ed, Nov. 4]. Arnold Beichman wrote in records were reviewed in this instance

The Los Angeles Times wrote a cau-tionary editorial headed "Suspicion Still Remains." On the New York Times op-ed page Oct. 31, Whittaker Chambers's biog-

the general said he was "unable to obtain documents on him as there are none." 1940s. But concerning the espionage al-legedly committed by Hiss in the 1930s, mentation of Alger Hiss's "official profes-sional contacts with Soviet officials" in the there are none. Volkogonov did find docuhave been released by the general is that rapher wrote that Volkogonov's statement raises more questions than it answers." In fact, the reason that no documents

because Hiss was not a spy. (Neither, it appears, was Whittaker Chambers.) Just because U.S. intelligence would say so. There are no Hiss files, however, were any that had been destroyed or retents, If Volkogonov or Primakov or the old spy files to competent scholars and dexed. The Russians have released those moved, they had and have no reason not to for Hiss files had any reason to believe there many archivists who took part in the search ournalists, who have published their conbeautifully preserved and thoroughly in-1930s (and earlier) are complete, intact, archives. The Soviet archives from the knows Soviet history and its intelligence That is not surprising to anyone who

might anybody. The case was essentially of no interest to the Soviets, but as a political hot potato in the United States, it spelled troudread days of Stalin's capricious whims ble for any Soviet agent or bureaucrat who writing or saying anything at all about it to other officials explained to me, Soviet intellilikewise. On the contrary, as Georgi Arba-tov, director of the Institute for USA and pole. They would have sedulously avoided gence agents and bureaucrats would not Canada, and several Russian archivists and not follow that the Soviets must have done counterpart of the Hiss case in 1948, it does probably have created a file on a Soviet have touched the Hiss case with a ten-foot comment or write about it in the



of Russia," Yevgeny Primakov. of the head of foreign intelligence services expressly that he examined the military ter refers to "archives of the intelligence services of the USSR," without restriction "Yevgeny Primakov has made no comment on the matter." In fact, Volkogonov's let-Soviet Union" is confirmed by "the opinion was not ever or anywhere recruited as an that his "firm conclusion that Alger Hiss intelligence files. He told me on videotape to KGB archives. Volkogonov told me agent of the intelligence services of the but not military intelligence files, and that letter apparently refers to a search of KGE Weinstein also writes that Volkogonov's

Hiss case that have not been made avail-The only files I know of concerning the

Institute's Cold War Archives Project The writer is director of the Nation -John Lowenthal

The reflex reactions by old Cold War-riors suggest how difficult it must be for does not reopen the case, it closes it. tions. For me-and, I daresay, for Alger Hiss and for history-Volkogonov's report Hiss's guilt to revisit their basic assumpthose with vested career interests in Alger

able for examination are Weinstein's own files. When challenged on interviews he promised to deposit his interview tapes with the Truman Library. As reported in the American Historical Association Newswriting he still has not done so. letter for February 1992 and as of this