

'Pumpkin Papers' May Go to Hiss

By Lawrence Meyer
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The Justice Department said yesterday it is taking steps to allow Alger Hiss to examine the "Pumpkin Papers" which played a key role in his perjury conviction 25 years ago.

Hiss, now 70 years old, has been seeking access to the papers and other documents as part of his continuing effort to prove his innocence. His efforts, along with those of others interested in the government's prosecution of him, could reopen examination of the controversial case—a rallying point for liberals in the early 1950s and the event that brought Richard M. Nixon wide public attention.

Attorney General Edward H. Levi, in a letter to Hiss' lawyer released yesterday, said that he has asked U.S. Attorney Paul Curran in New York to open the containers holding five rolls of microfilm "if they are in fact located therein" and to take "prompt steps" to determine whether anything on the film cannot be shown to Hiss.

Although the Freedom of Information Act, under which Hiss requested access to the microfilm, allows a number of exemptions from making requested material available, Levi said that "no exemption will be invoked unless there is a compelling reason for doing so." The only exception Levi made was for information dealing with national security matters.

The "Pumpkin Papers" were dramatically produced in December, 1948, by Hiss' principal accuser, Whittaker Chambers. Chambers had charged before the House Un-American Activities Committee, of which Rep. Richard Nixon was a member, that Hiss had sup-

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plied him with military secrets in the 1930s. Chambers testified that both he and Hiss were spies for the Soviet Union. Hiss denied knowing Chambers or being a Soviet spy.

To support his charges, Chambers produced five rolls of microfilm that he said he had stored in a hollowed-out pumpkin on his western Maryland farm. Hiss was brought to trial on federal perjury charges in 1949, but

the jury could not agree on a verdict. At his second trial, in late 1949, the government introduced new evidence, including documents allegedly copied on Hiss' personal typewriter.

Hiss was convicted of perjury in January, 1950, and served more than three years of a five-year sentence.

In addition to the letter to Hiss, Levi wrote Stephen W. Salant of 1912 R St. NW, an economist here, and Peter H. Irons of Summerville, Mass., a

researcher interested in the Hiss case. Both had filed requests for access to the "Pumpkin Papers" and other documents.

Hiss had filed an administrative appeal under the Freedom of Information Act after his request to see the microfilm and other documents had been rejected. Levi said in his letter that he is still considering the other materials requested by Hiss.

Levi said that Hiss would

"be granted access to the films, as a matter of discretion, to the extent that the review discussed herein permits a determination that this can be accomplished without jeopardizing the safety of the film or revealing national security information."

A Justice Department spokesman said that Hiss would also probably be permitted to have the microfilm examined to determine its age, a matter of controversy at the time of the trial.

Hiss could not be reached immediately for comment.

Tanzania Vote Set

Agence France-Presse

DAR ES SALAAM, June 25

—Tanzanians will go to the polls during the last week of October to elect a new president and Parliament, it was announced here today. Erasto Mangenya, chairman of the electoral commission, said about 6 million persons will be eligible to vote compared to just under 5 million in the 1970 elections.