

Professor Says Alger Hiss Lied About His Links With Chambers

NYTimes By PETER KIHSS MAR 18 1976

Allen Weinstein, the Smith College professor whose suit caused the release of 15,376 pages of Federal Bureau of Investigation files in the Alger Hiss case, says that Mr. Hiss "has been lying about his relations" with Whittaker Chambers for nearly 30 years.

Citing defense records "generously" opened to him by Mr. Hiss and other documents, Mr. Weinstein says that people "who once believed in Alger Hiss may now be persuaded that he stole the documents in question" from the State Department as alleged by Mr. Chambers, who said that they were both involved in Soviet espionage in 1938.

Mr. Hiss, in a comment relayed in his behalf last night, decried Mr. Weinstein's statements as "terribly thin stuff

and childish" and charged that he lacked legal background to weigh the value of data in the files.

Professor Weinstein's views were released to The New York Times yesterday by The New York Review of Books, which will carry in its April 1 issue his six-page critique of a new book on Mr. Hiss.

The book, "Alger Hiss: The True Story," is by John Chabot Smith, a former New York Herald Tribune reporter who also had access to defense records and interviewed Mr. Hiss and his family.

Mr. Smith contends that Mr. Hiss was innocent of giving documents to Mr. Chambers and suggests that Mr. Chambers could have acquired some of them from open sources,

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typed copies of others himself and fished four handwritten memorandums by Mr. Hiss from a wastebasket.

The 485-page book by Mr. Smith is being published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston next Monday, the 25th anniversary of Mr. Hiss's going to prison. Mr. Hiss, a former high State Department official, served 44 months in prison. He has consistently insisted that he is innocent of all charges.

Mr. Hiss was at Boston University last night to give a lecture and had not seen the Weinstein article. But his son, Tony Hiss, 34 years old, a writer for The New Yorker and publisher of The Real World, a bi-monthly, relayed a request for his comment.

Tony Hiss reported that his father, 71, responded that Mr. Weinstein's critique was "foolishness," and "he's obviously no lawyer." He said that Alger Hiss conceded that there had been "problems" with defense typewriter experts, but "the art of typewriter examination in those days just wasn't anything." Tony Hiss added that his father said that he had told Mr. Weinstein a week ago "I thought for a long time you've had biased views."

In his article, Mr. Weinstein

said that a defense lawyer, John F. Davis, on Dec. 28, 1948, wrote the chief defense counsel that Alger Hiss asked him earlier that month to check on an old typewriter "which he remembers he gave to Pat, the son of Claudia Catlett, who used to do the washing."

This means, Mr. Weinstein asserted, that "Hiss deliberately misled the F.B.I., the grand jury and two trial juries about his knowledge of the Woodstock typewriter's whereabouts." He said that Mr. Hiss three times between Dec. 10 and 15 told the grand jury that he had no knowledge of how the typewriter had been disposed of.

Other Reports Cited

Mr. Weinstein said that a defense typewriting expert, J. Howard Haring, reported to the chief defense counsel, Edward C. McLean, on Dec. 6, 1948, that "the Chambers documents" had been typed on a Woodstock, the same machine used in a 1933 letter typed by Mr. Hiss's wife, Priscilla. But four days later, Mr. Weinstein said, Mr. Hill told the grand jury that she had no idea of the make of the machine or how she had got rid of it.

Mr. Weinstein said that the defense files contained reports by another expert, Harry Cas-

sady, "that Mrs. Hiss typed the documents" submitted by Mr. Chambers. Still another, Edwin Fearing, had reported that the documents were typed on the Hiss machine, Mr. Weinstein said.

"Even more troubling to the defense," he wrote, "several of their experts also decided that either Alger or Priscilla Hiss had written the interlinear corrections on the various typed documents, thus linking the couple even more closely to the material in question."

Mr. Weinstein also said the following:

¶Mr. Chambers's claim to have belonged to a Soviet intelligence network was confirmed by F.B.I. interviews with Henry Julian Wadleigh, Franklin Victor Reno and William Edward Crane, who said that they had been members of the ring.

¶Letters, previously unavailable, from Mr. Chambers in mid-November, 1938, to Prof. Meyer Schapiro and Herbert Solow bear out his claim that he had withheld the stolen documents and warned Soviet agents that he had them as 'life preservers' for himself.

¶Emanuel Bloch, counsel for William Rosen, a man to whose name a Hiss car had been transferred, confirmed to His lawyers Mr. Chambers's contention that "the transfer had

been arranged by a high-ranking Communist."

¶The Chambers documents included a handwritten exact copy by Mr. Hiss of a January 1938 United States Embassy report on an interview with Mrs. Adolph Rubens, an American woman under arrest in Moscow, and a September 1939 memorandum by a State Department official said that the Embassy's report had reportedly gotten back immediately to the Soviet Union.

Another Viewpoint

In his book upholding Mr. Hiss, Mr. Smith said:

¶There was nothing to connect the typed copies with Mr. Hiss except that they were typed on a machine much like one that his wife owned and that was given away before December 1937 — a week before the earliest date on the Chambers papers.

¶It would have taken "years" for Mrs. Hiss, not a touch typist, to copy the 64 pages, and "they must have been done by someone who typed a lot faster," transposed letters, which Mrs. Hiss did not, and changed ribbons often, which Mrs. Hiss did not.

¶One grand juror told Hiss lawyers that the grand jury had voted its perjury indictment against Mr. Hiss by "only one more than a bare majority," as against the assertion by former

President Richard M. Nixon, a key instigator of the Hiss case, that all 19 voted to indict. Mr. Nixon made the assertion in his book "Six Crises."

The United States Supreme Court was one vote short of granting review after Justices Felix Frankfurter and Stanley Reed disqualified themselves because they had been character witnesses at the Hiss trial, and Tom C. Clark disqualified himself because he had been Attorney General. Justice William O. Douglas reported that if either Justice Reed or Justice Frankfurter had been available to vote, certiorari would have been granted, "and in my view no court at any time could possibly have sustain the conviction."

Mr. Smith wrote that Hiss lawyers found Mrs. Hiss difficult to deal with in preparing trial testimony, and she seemed to fail to understand that typing papers could imply that she was involved in a conspiracy.

He said "it was all too easy to assume that maybe Priscilla had been mixed up in Chambers's spy plot," even for Mr. Hiss's initial libel lawyer.

"The Hisses were quite unaware of all this," Mr. Smith wrote. "Alger remembers Priscilla worrying about the possibility that she might have to answer questions on the witness stand about her private life."