



ALGER HISS
'I'll be vindicated'

Hiss Bears Nixon No Animosity

By Don Wegars

Whittaker Chambers has been dead for 13 years, Richard M. Nixon is in retirement at San Clemente, and Alger Hiss lunched here yesterday on spinach salad, roast New York steak, pilaf and rum cakes.

The man former President Nixon described as the first of his six crises is hale, as elegant as before, and not very vindictive.

Though commentators have said that the former president's career was built on branding Hiss a communist, a traitor, a perjurer, Hiss himself told a luncheon meeting of the Press Club that he doesn't hold any grudges against Nixon, and really doesn't know him.

"I never knew his kindness, the subtlety of his familiar handshake," the 70-year-old former diplomat said of the former president. "I have no personal animosity."

Whittaker Chambers, an admitted former communist, had told the government that Hiss had passed State Department information to him in 1937 and 1938. Hiss denied this. In 1950, however, at the end of a second trial for perjury, Hiss was found guilty of lying to the government and served three years and eight months in prison.

The trials and accusations contained much of the cold war rhetoric of the time, and were additionally spiced with missing typewriters, and microfilms found in pumpkins.

"It would be a very personal satisfaction to be pardoned," Hiss told the 300 guests yesterday.

As he has over the many years, he denied any wrongdoing, and suggested that, somehow, "there is a scapegoat urge in our national genes . . . it goes back to the Salem witchcraft trials . . ."

His career, until it ended, had been meteoric. He worked for the New Deal, was executive secretary to the Dumbarton Oaks Conference that served as a stepping stone to the United Nations, and was secretary-general in San Francisco 30 years ago to the formation of the U.N. itself and, at the time the government began prosecuting him, was president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"I have no doubt that I'll be completely vindicated some day," Hiss said yesterday before the luncheon. "I've been working at it for 30 years."

What he would like, he said, is a presidential pardon. He tended to reject, with the diffidence he has been known for, a special commission of inquiry that might clear him.

"I don't think I'm all that important," he said.

Hiss now works for a stationery firm in New York, has applied to be readmitted to the Massachusetts bar, hopes that will work out and has a feeling of "deja vu" about some of the so-called political trials of the 1960s and 1970s.

"I've seen this before," he said.

Former president Nixon, he said, was not malicious in pursuing his case, nor was the late Senator Joseph McCarthy.

"They grabbed a kite that seemed to be rising," Hiss said.