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Hiss Can Examine 'Pumpkin Papers'

Washington

Attorney General Edward H. Levi ordered the Justice Department yesterday to let Alger Hiss examine the celebrated "Pumpkin Papers" microfilms that led to his 1950 perjury conviction following allegations he once passed U.S. state secrets to Russia.

Hiss sued under the Freedom of Information Act for access to the five rolls of microfilmed State Department documents — popularly known as the pumpkin papers — that were used as evidence in the perjury trial.

Richard M. Nixon, then a young California congressman, said he obtained the microfilms from a hollowed-out pumpkin during a cold war spy hunt. Mr. Nixon said he was led to the papers by Whittaker Chambers, a journalist and confessed ex-Communist spy who was a chief prosecution witness against Hiss.

Hiss, a former high-ranking State Department official, still denies Chambers' charges that he gave secret State Department documents to the Russians in the 1930s. The jury convicted Hiss of perjury in 1950 and he spent 44 months in prison.

Levi announced he had decided to make the film available to Hiss after it has been given a national security screening to determine whether any portions should remain secret.

Hiss has indicated he may seek exoneration from his perjury conviction if he can determine by analyzing the film that it was manufactured later than the year in which Chambers testified he exposed it, 1938.

The film had been placed in a pumpkin for safekeeping by Chambers during the congressional investigation of his charges against Hiss.

United Press