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Hiss Receives Pumpkin Film

By Herbert Hadad

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NEW YORK, July 31—Alger Hiss, convicted 25 years ago in the "Pumpkin Papers" case that propelled Richard M. Nixon to national fame, today saw three rolls of microfilm that figured in the case against him, thanked the government profusely and promptly announced the next step in his plan for vindication.

Hiss said he was "very grateful" for the "gracious action" of Attorney General Edward H. Levi who cleared the way for the look at the Pumpkin Papers—actually five rolls of microfilm, two of which were used in his trials—and for the copies of the three microfilms provided him today.

He said it was the first time he'd seen these three films. Hiss then asked the government for 40 more documents and records relating to the two perjury trials that sent him to prison for 44 months at the height of the spy-scare era.

Hiss, who with co-plaintiffs had sought the microfilms under the Freedom of Information Act, said after examination of the films that much of the material appeared to refer to technical Navy Department data that would have been "useless for espionage."

William H. Reuben, one co-plaintiff and an author, said the films revealed data on such items as fire extinguishers and life rafts—"totally useless espionage material. Total garbage."

Hiss, 70, looking fit and much younger, said he also was requesting a "snippet" of the original microfilm for chemical analysis. The question has been raised over the years whether the film reportedly used to photograph the Pumpkin Papers actually was available at the time.

Hiss was a State Department official who served Franklin Delano Roosevelt and accompanied him to the Yalta Conference in February of 1945. Hiss was convicted in 1950 for perjury after denying he passed State Department documents to confessor Communist spy Whittaker Chambers during the 1930s.

Chambers supported his accusations against Hiss by producing the microfilms hidden in a hollowed-out pumpkin on his Maryland farm. Photo-

graphic prints of two of the five rolls were used as evidence at Hiss' trial. Chambers died in 1961.

The three other rolls and copies were delivered this morning to the U.S. attorney's annex in downtown Manhattan by Justice Department lawyer Quinlan Shea.

For 3½ hours, Hiss; his son Anthony, a writer; Hiss lawyer K. Randlett Walster; two film experts with magnification equipment; writer Reuben and others pored over the material.

Shea then gathered up the original data and returned it to Washington for safekeeping. He said the Hiss group's reaction to the data was "cautious delight" that it finally had been released.

Hiss, disbarred as a lawyer, is now a salesman for a New York printing house. At a press conference called by the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, which in 1973 had called for President Nixon's impeachment, Hiss released a page-and-a-half statement that more chided than accused the press for its role in his conviction.

"... Almost every paper in the country carried pictures of Congressman Richard M. Nixon of the House Un-American Activities Committee peering at the strips of film through a magnifying glass," said Hiss.

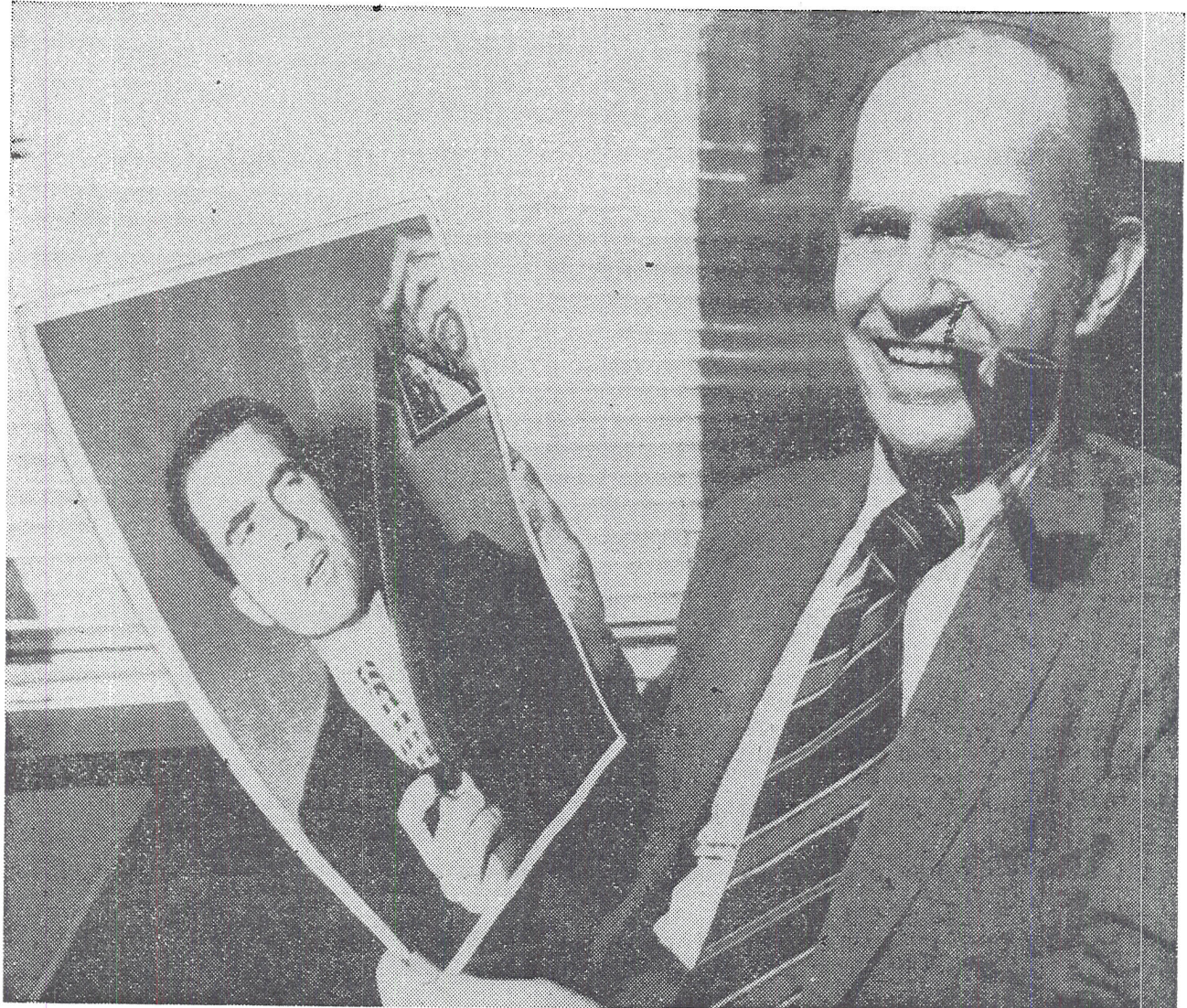
"And the same papers quoted Nixon, calling the films 'documentary evidence' of the most serious series of treasonable activities which has been launched against the government in the history of America."

He said that the two rolls of film introduced at his trial here in 1950 "in no way supported Chambers' charges that I had been a Soviet spy. These don't either.

"But all five helped to convict me because almost every newspaper carried pictures of Nixon peering at these strips of film through a magnifying glass.

"The message intended and conveyed was that microfilm and spies go together."

The 40 items Hiss now seeks from the Justice Department include a variety of data, including the original Pumpkin Paper microfilm "and the containers and wrapping in which said films were found."



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Alger Hiss displays a 1948 photograph of then-Rep. Richard M. Nixon holding up one of the five "Pumpkin Papers"

film strips that figured in the case against Hiss. Hiss viewed three strips he had not seen previously.