

**James Kilpatrick**

## *The Hiss Case Revisited*

**A** MOVEMENT IS gaining momentum for the sanctification of a consummate liar, Alger Hiss by name. Before the movement gets completely out of hand, a few words of caution, remonstrance and reminder are in order.

The judgment of "liar" is a jury's judgment, returned in January, 1950 after two long trials. Now Hiss, at 71, is seeking once more in the court of public opinion to overturn that verdict.



Because a whole generation has grown up since the Hiss case began a brief recapitulation may be useful. The case involved two men. One was Alger Hiss, who, in 1948 was slim, elegant and urbane, a rising star in the nation's public life. He had every respectable credential, He was John Hopkins, Phi Beta Kappa, Harvard Law, a onetime clerk to Justice Holmes, secretary to the American delegation at Dumbarton Oaks, adviser to Roosevelt at Yalta, secretary-general of the UN Conference at San Francisco.

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**T**HE OTHER WAS Whittaker Chambers, who in 1948 was pudgy, passive and obscure, a senior editor for Time magazine. He had nothing going for him. Born in Philadelphia in 1901, Chambers was a student radical, a runaway, a postwar leftist who in 1925 joined the Communist party as a paid functionary. He was a man with a disreputable history of false names, petty theft and atheism. In 1938, after four years of espionage and infiltration in Washington, he broke absolutely with the Communist Party.

Twenty-seven years ago Chambers was summoned to testify before the House Committee on Unamerican Activities, which was then investigating Communist infiltration of government offices. Chambers identified Hiss as a member of a secret Communist cell. Hiss denied this absolutely.

One of the two men plainly was lying. Under the prodding of a young California congressman, Chambers patiently unfolded his story: As a party functionary, he had known Hiss intimately, had stayed in his home, had transmitted stolen documents.

This was confrontation worthy of any Sophocles or Shakespeare. Chambers, the witness, had but one purpose — to testify to the evil of communism.

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**W**HITTAKER CHAMBER was America's Solzhenitsyn — an intellectual who knew communism closely, at first hand, and saw with terrible clarity the absolute evil of Communist ideology. A gentle man, he never sought to destroy Hiss as a person. For months Chambers resisted opportunities to speak of actual espionage. Chambers wanted only to bear witness for freedom, and against slavery. One day his greatness as writer, thinker and human being will be recognized.

On his new road to martyrdom, Hiss will get some mileage from Chambers' association with the California congressman of 1948. The reasoning is that because Richard Nixon lied 1972-74, therefore Whittaker Chambers lied 1948-50. The reasoning is phony, slippery and sly.