

Hiss a Liar, Case Expert Concludes

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By William Chapman
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Previously unpublished evidence in the 26-year-old Alger Hiss perjury case shows that Hiss was not an innocent victim of McCarthyism, a Smith College professor has concluded.

Allen Weinstein claims in a magazine article to be published today that Hiss "has been lying . . . for nearly 30 years" about his relations with his adversary, Whitaker Chambers, the confessed Communist spy.

In a lengthy book review, Weinstein, an authority on the espionage trials of the 1940s and 1950s, contends that one of Hiss' main arguments in his defense was proved false by his own hired experts, whose opinions never surfaced in the sensational Hiss-Chambers case that rocked the country and ended with Hiss' conviction.

At a news conference in New York yesterday, Hiss, 71, denied ever lying about his relations with Chambers. He said he had never engaged in espionage and had never given any stolen official documents to Chambers. "I was innocent then and I am innocent now," Hiss said.

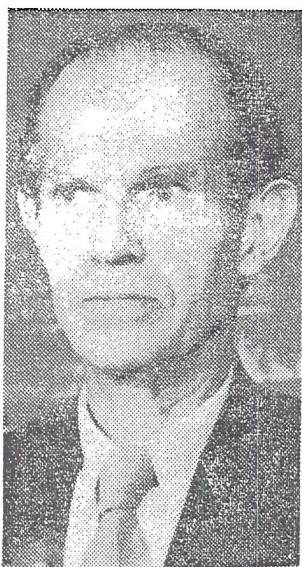
Over the years Hiss has contended that he was framed in a conspiracy that included "forgery by typewriter" of documents he allegedly had stolen from the State Department in the 1930s.

Weinstein says that the new evidence shows that typewriter experts retained

See HISS, A7, Col. 1



ALLEN WEINSTEIN
... unpublished evidence



ALGER HISS
... restates innocence

HISS, From A1

by Hiss found that the documents had been typed on Hiss' Woodstock typewriter and that handwritten corrections on the documents had been done either by Hiss or his wife, Priscilla.

"With the defense experts as friends, the Hiss camp hardly needed enemies," Weinstein wrote. "The defense's basic problem was in keeping the government and the public from learning about the conclusions of its own experts, which it successfully managed to do at the trial."

Weinstein disclosed the unpublished evidence in the current issue of The New York Review of Books while reviewing a book that strongly defends Hiss' innocence.

The book, "Alger Hiss: The True Story," by John Chabot Smith, argues that Hiss was framed by his accuser, Chambers, and concludes with an appeal for vindication of Hiss by act of Congress. Smith covered the two Hiss trials in 1949 and 1950 for The New York Herald Tribune.

Weinstein's research included more than 15,000 pages of FBI material made public by a Freedom of Information suit he filed, but the most significant new evidence was turned over to him by Hiss and his lawyers.

Hiss was convicted for perjury in 1950, and served 44 months in prison. Chambers testified that Hiss, a high State Department official, had given him copies of stolen documents which were transmitted to Soviet agents. Hiss maintained that he never stole any documents and had known Chambers only briefly, under another name.

The central piece of evidence in the case was a Woodstock typewriter, which, according to FBI experts, had been used by the Hisses to type the documents. Hiss' supporters have contended over the years that either another typewriter with similar type figures was used or that someone, possibly Chambers, had gained access to their Woodstock in order to frame Hiss.

But, according to Weinstein, Hiss' experts investigated the machine and found that it had been used to type the documents and that the typing was identical in technique to that on other papers typed by Priscilla Hiss.

"... Almost every expert hired by Hiss' defense—before and during the trials—confirmed the judgments of the FBI's own experts," Weinstein wrote. "They agreed that the typing was identical to specimens of Priscilla Hiss' typing and came from the same Woodstock machine."

He added: "Even more troubling to the defense, 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."

Using documents provided by the Hiss defense, Weinstein named Harry Cassidy as the expert who "showed in detail" that Mrs. Hiss had typed the documents. The defense expert who showed that the documents had been typed on the Hiss machine was Edwin Fearing. Neither testified at the trial.

Weinstein charged that Hiss "lied repeatedly" about his own knowledge of the Woodstock. Hiss told a grand jury that he had no "independent knowledge" of the typewriter, for which the FBI was conducting a vigorous search in Washington junk stores.

But a letter from John F. Davis, one of Hiss' defense lawyers, shows that Hiss had told Davis that he had given the machine to the son of a Hiss household maid, Weinstein wrote.

At his news conference yesterday, Hiss said, "I never withheld information about the Woodstock typewriter from the authorities." He said he could not recall having told his lawyer, Davis, that he had given the Woodstock away, but said he did recall having given the lawyer "leads" as to its possible disposition to the Salvation Army, former employees or second-hand dealers.

In his new book, Smith contends in Hiss' defense that Chambers bought another old Woodstock and typed the incriminating copies in a way that made it appear they had been typed on the Hiss Woodstock.

The copied documents were brought out by Chambers, many years after their alleged theft, when Chambers was being pressed in a libel suit to provide evidence for his charges that Hiss had been a member of a spy cell in the 1930s.

When asked why they were hidden away for so many years, Chambers maintained that he had needed them as "life preservers" when he broke with the Communist Party in the 1930s. Chambers said he feared Communist retaliation and claimed that his possession of the stolen documents would protect him.

Weinstein wrote that he found evidence to support Chambers' version in "several previously unavailable letters." In one letter, written in 1938, Chambers recalled having sent former Soviet intelligence colleagues "photographic copies of handwritten matters the appearance of which would seriously embarrass them."

In addition, Weinstein wrote, a former Communist named Ludwig Lore told the FBI in 1940 that Chambers had asked him to hold onto a packet of "life preserver" material for several months after Chambers defected in 1938.

Weinstein said that although Chambers had lied on occasion, his essential testimony "has held up remarkably well under the most skeptical scrutiny of all the new evidence. The same cannot be said . . . for Hiss' testimony."