

THE VENONA SECRETS

Field. The first Hiss trial was severely criticized by those who believed Hiss guilty. Even before the trial ended, the press learned that Kaufman had manipulated the calendar so that he could be made the judge in the case.¹¹⁵ Congressman Frank Keefe, a Republican from Wisconsin, placed in the *Congressional Record* of July 18, 1949, serious allegations of misconduct and corruption by Judge Kaufman, some directly linked to New York congressman Emanuel Celler. Kaufman had allegedly received bribes on behalf of Celler from companies that wanted his influence with executive branch agencies.

Hiss in Venona

Hiss was released from prison in November 1954 and, until his death in 1996, continued to insist that he was innocent. But evidence in the trial and some developed after his conviction showed the opposite. In August 1969 the NSA finished breaking a March 30, 1945, *Venona* message from the Washington, D.C., *Rezidentura* to Moscow headquarters. It reported a meeting between the Soviet "illegal" *Rezident* Akhmerov and an agent of Soviet military intelligence called "Ales." In reading the message, one sees clearly that "Ales" was Alger Hiss.

The message said that "Ales" had been working for military intelligence since 1935. (While most of the others were transferred to NKVD in 1938, Hiss remained with military intelligence.) "Ales" maintained a small group "for the most part consisting of his relations." Akhmerov's report went on to say that "the group and "Ales" himself work on obtaining military information only. Materials in the State Department allegedly interest Soviet military intelligence very little and he does not produce them regularly."

"Ales" (Hiss) told Akhmerov that he and his group had recently received Soviet medals. He reported "Ales" as saying that "after the Yalta Conference when he had gone on to Moscow, a Soviet person-

Whittaker Chambers's Spy Ring

age in a very responsible position (Ales implied that it was Comrade Vyshinsky) allegedly got in touch with Ales and at the behest of military intelligence passed on to him their gratitude...."¹¹⁶

Hiss had been at the Yalta Conference and had then flown to Moscow with Secretary of State E. R. Stettinius, Jr. He worked as deputy and then as head of the Office of Special Political Affairs which received a considerable amount of military information.

When this *Venona* message was partially broken back in 1950, the FBI tentatively concluded that "Ales" was Alger Hiss. A May 1950, FBI memorandum said, "It would appear likely that this individual is Alger Hiss in view of the fact that he was in the State Department and the information from Chambers indicated that his wife, Priscilla, was active in Soviet espionage and he also had a brother, Donald, in the State Department. It also is to be noted that Hiss did attend the Yalta Conference as a special advisor to President Roosevelt, and he would, of course, have conferred with high officials of other nations attending the conference."¹¹⁷ The information that Hiss flew on the State Department plane from Yalta to Moscow confirmed the identification.

Hiss's Last Report

On September 12, 1946, columnist Drew Pearson wrote an article based on a classified U.S. military study of British military operations against the Greek Communist insurgency. Although Pearson misquoted the report, it was clear that he had seen a copy. This created great concern in State Department security since the document also contained highly classified information on the British order of battle in Greece. The document had been in the office of Alger Hiss.

The investigation showed that the document, prepared at the request of the State Department, was missing. It also showed a gross security laxness in Hiss's Office of Special Political Affairs.

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office had frequently ordered extra copies of classified documents which then went missing. When Hiss was questioned about this, he immediately denied responsibility. In the days before Xerox machines, a spy had to copy, retype, or photograph a document. If extra copies were lying around, it was relatively easy to steal one. The investigation indicated that the document had reached Drew Pearson, thanks to his reporter David Karr.¹¹⁸

A sensitive document, such as this report, would first be used by the KGB for its intelligence value and then passed to a different agent to exploit in a disinformation operation. David Karr was the other agent. Starting in the 1930s as a reporter for the *Daily Worker*, and therefore a member of the Communist Party, Karr worked his way into the legitimate newspaper business. After World War II, the poor boy from New York turned reporter suddenly had a new career as an international financier and wheeler-dealer, with access to important Western political figures. Cynics suspected that he was working for the KGB and that his vast wealth was supplied by the Soviet government.

The cynics were proved right when in 1992 one of Russia's best journalists, Yevgenia Albats, found an important KGB document in the Soviet archives. It showed that Karr had been regularly providing the KGB with information that was in turn relayed to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The 1978 document, which showed the extent of Karr's political connections in the United States, stated:

In 1978, American Senator Edward Kennedy appealed to the KGB to assist in establishing cooperation between Soviet organizations and the California firm Agritech, headed by former Senator J. Tunney. This firm in turn was connected to a French-American company, Finatech S.A., which was run by a

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competent KGB source, the prominent Western financier D. Karr, through whom opinions had been confidentially exchanged for several years between the General Secretary of the Communist Party and Sen. Kennedy. D. Karr provided the KGB with technical information on conditions in the U.S. and other capitalist countries which were regularly reported to the Central Committee.¹¹⁹

Venona also provided information on Karr's work for Soviets. In 1944 Soviet agent Samuel Krafzur relayed to S intelligence officer Vladimir Pravdin information that he received from Karr.¹²⁰ One of Karr's last business deals—he July 7, 1979—was with Armand Hammer to market 1980 S gold Olympic coins.¹²¹ President Carter decided to boycott Olympics because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, but coins were marketed anyway.

Despite his conviction, Alger Hiss's defenders have tried in which way to discredit the evidence against him, as, for example 1962 when United Press International reported: "Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy said yesterday that new claims of innocence by convicted perjurer Alger Hiss are not supported by the facts."¹²² But successive American governments and courts have repudiated all of t

The last attempt to exonerate Hiss took place in 1992. The active supporter of Hiss, John Lowenthal, contacted the highly respected Russian Colonel General Dmitry Volkogonov, who had been assigned by President Boris Yeltsin to oversee the Russian archives. He asked that the archives be checked to find material on Alger Hiss.

Volkogonov asked Yevgeny Primakov, then head of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), to examine the KGB archives and see if anything on Hiss could be found. Primakov respo

Notes

- 75 For more information on Dozenberg, see: Herbert Romerstein and Stanislav Levchenko, *The KGB Against the "Main Enemy": How the Soviet Intelligence Service Operates Against the United States*, pp. 6–9.
- 76 Chambers, FBI statement, p. 60.
- 77 Ikal File, handwritten protocol, December 22, 1937.
- 78 *Ibid.*, handwritten protocol, December 24, 1937.
- 79 *Ibid.*, typewritten interrogation, January 8, 1939, and January 24, 1939.
- 80 Sam Tanenhaus, *Whittaker Chambers: A Biography*, p. 130.
- 81 "The Faking of Americans," Part I, "The Soviet Passport Racket" in Herbert Solow papers, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.
- 82 *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 17, 18, 23.
- 83 *Ibid.*, Part II, "Welcome, Soviet Spies!" p. 23.
- 84 *Ibid.*, Solow Papers, Solow to Lovestone, April 16, 1939.
- 85 *Ibid.*, Solow Memorandum, November 13, 1938, 10.
- 86 *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- 87 Chambers to Robert Cantwell, no date, circa 1938, in Robert Cantwell Papers, Special Collections, Knight Library, University of Oregon.
- 88 Comintern Archives, Fond 495, Opis 14, Delo 73, p. 28.
- 89 Although a few of the books published by Modern Age Books were by non-Communists such as the well-known journalist H. V. Kaltenborn, most of them were by Communist Party members like Bruce Minton, the former husband of Soviet agent Louise Bransten, and pro-Soviet propagandists like Corliss Lamont, Hewlett Johnson, the dean of Canterbury, and Anna Louise Strong.
- 90 FBI Report, background information on Alfred K. Stern in File NY100-65568, May 18, 1955, p. 12.
- 91 The Berle notes and Chambers's comments were in Chambers, FBI statement, pp. 225–34.
- 92 Chambers, *Witness*, p. 470.
- 93 Department of State press release, February 19, 1945.
- 94 Department of State press release, December 10, 1946.
- 95 Testimony of Dean Acheson before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Historical Series)*, vol. 2, 1949–1950, pp. 11, 12.
- 96 Attachment to FBI Report 65-56402-2944, Letter from John F. Cronin to Mr. Patrick Coyne, Federal Bureau of Investigation, October 14, 1947. The FBI had contacted Father Cronin because two journalists had told the bureau that the priest had interviewed a former Communist operative who had information about Communist infiltration of the U.S. government.
- 97 House Committee on Un-American Activities, *Hearings Regarding Communist Espionage in the United States Government*, Testimony of Whittaker Chambers, August 3, 1948, p. 565.
- 98 Chambers, FBI statement, p. 230.
- 99 *New York Journal American*, December 21, 1948.
- 100 For example: *Venona*, New York to Moscow, June 30, 1943, and March 20, 1943.
- 101 *Venona*, New York to Moscow, July 22, 1944.
- 102 *American Mercury*, New York,

Notes

- February 1949, pp. 153, 158–59.
- 103 FBI Report on Priscilla Fansler Hobson Hiss in File 100-376016, dated May 20, 1955, p. 1.
- 104 *Chicago Tribune*, December 9, 1949.
- 105 Chambers, FBI statement, pp. 87, 88.
- 106 Comintern Archives, Fond 515, Opus 1, Delo 3150.
- 107 Dies Committee, *Report on the C.I.O. Political Action Committee*, pp. 12, 54.
- 108 *Official Reports on the Expulsion of Communist Dominated Organizations from the CIO*, Congress of Industrial Organizations, Washington, D.C., 1954, pp. 34ff.
- 109 FBI, New York to Director, in File 65-1642-26.
- 110 Chambers, FBI statement, p. 147.
- 111 Czech National Archives, Ministry of National Security File #4523, March 30, 1955.
- 112 Maria Schmidt, *Behind the Scenes of the Showtrials of Central-Eastern Europe*, Budapest, 1993 (uncorrected manuscript), quoting from Archives of the Ministry of the Interior, Noel Field's file, transcript, September 23, 1954, and September 29, 1954.
- 113 Noel Field, "Hitching Our Wagon to a Star" in *Mainstream*, New York, January 1961.
- 114 Department of State telegram, September 14, 1970.
- 115 *New York Journal American*, July 1, 1949.
- 116 *Venona*, Washington to Moscow, March 30, 1945.
- 117 FBI Memo from Belmont to Ladd, May 15, 1950, released to Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan in 1998.
- 118 State Department Security Archives in U.S. National Archives, Memo, September 12, 1946, to Director of Intelligence from Colonel R. F. Ennis, OSC, Chief, Intelligence Group; memorandum for the files, Department of State, Samuel Klaus and memo from J. Anthony Panuch to Alger Hiss and John Ross, October 2, 1946.
- 119 Yevgenia Albats, *The State Within a State: The KGB and Its Hold on Russia—Past, Present, and Future*, p. 250. She originally published this document in June 1992 in an article in the Moscow newspaper *Izvestia*, which had by then become prodemocratic.
- 120 *Venona*, New York to Moscow, July 15, 1944.
- 121 *Fortune*, December 3, 1979.
- 122 *Washington Post*, April 5, 1962, p. A10.
- 123 *New York Times*, October 29, 1992, and *Washington Post*, October 31, 1992.
- 124 *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, Moscow, November 24, 1992, p. 4.
- 125 *New York Times*, December 17, 1992.
- 126 *New York Times*, December 7, 1995.
- 127 *The New Republic*, December 30, 1996.

CHAPTER 5

- 1 A translation of the document appears in Harvey Klehr, et al., *The Secret World of American Communism*, pp. 87ff. The translation uses the term "Secret Apparatus," but the original Russian-language document in Comintern Archives, Fond 495, Opus 74, Delo 472, p. 12, shows the term as "*Konspirativnogo Apparata*," which is more properly translated as "Conspiratorial Apparatus."

THE VENONA SECRETS

**Exposing Soviet Espionage
and America's Traitors**

Herbert Romerstein and Eric Breindel

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Appendix B



Max Bedacht, the leader of the Soviet underground in the United States, in 1935, the year he recruited Whittaker Chambers for espionage.



Pavel Fitin, head of the Foreign Department of the NKVD during World War II.



KGB Archives

Iskhak Akhmerov, the NKVD "illegal" Resident in the United States during World War II.



Jacob Golos, a senior NKVD in the United States during the 1930s and 1940s.

Appendix B



National Security Agency

State Department official and Soviet spy Alger Hiss (foreground) at a 1948 congressional hearing with his accuser, former Soviet agent Whittaker Chambers. Elizabeth Bentley, another former Soviet agent, is to Chambers's immediate right.

National Security Agency



Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, both executed for passing atomic secrets to the Soviet Union.

National Security Agency



Klaus Fuchs, who worked on the secret atomic bomb project and later confessed to passing classified information to the Soviets.

Appendix A

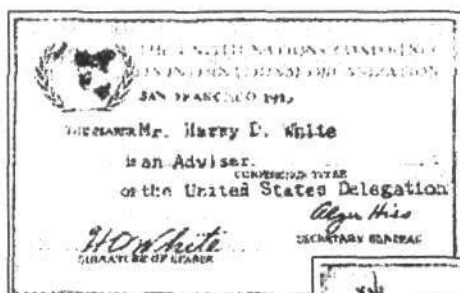


National Security Agency

William Weisband of the U.S. Army Signal Security Agency, who alerted Moscow to the fact that the Americans had broken the Soviet code.



Judy Coplon, an NKVD spy in Department of Justice.



Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Harry Dexter White's credentials for the founding conference of the United Nations, signed by Alger Hiss. White, Hiss, was a Soviet agent.

VENONA

MGB

From: WASHINGTON
 To: MOSCOW
 No: 1822

38 March 1945

Further to our telegram No. 283[a]. As a result of "[D] A.'s"[i] chat with "ALES"[ii] the following has been ascertained:

1. ALES has been working with the NEIGHBORS[SOSEDI][iii] continuously since 1935.
2. For some years past he has been the leader of a small group of the NEIGHBORS' probationers[STAZHERY], for the most part consisting of his relations.
3. The group and ALES himself work on obtaining military information only. Materials on the "BANK"[iv] allegedly interest the NEIGHBORS very little and he does not produce them regularly.
4. All the last few years ALES has been working with "POL"[v] who also meets other members of the group occasionally.
5. Recently ALES and his whole group were awarded Soviet decorations.
6. After the YALTA Conference, when he had gone on to MOSCOW, a Soviet personage in a very responsible position (ALES gave to understand that it was Comrade VYSHINSKIY) allegedly got in touch with ALES and at the behest of the Military NEIGHBORS passed on to him their gratitude and so on.

No. 431

VADIM[vi]

Notes: [a] Not available.

Comments:

- [i] A.: "A." seems the most likely garble here although "A." has not been confirmed elsewhere in the WASHINGTON traffic.
- [ii] ALES: Probably Alger HISS.
- [iii] SOSEDI: Members of another Soviet Intelligence organization, here probably the GRU.
- [iv] BANK: The U.S. State Department.
- [v] POL: i.e. "PAUL," unidentified cover-name.
- [vi] VADIM: Anatolij Borisovich GROMOV, MIB resident in WASHINGTON.

8 August 1969

VENONA