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ALGER HISS CASE

The 27-year campaign by Alger Hiss and his friends to convince the American people that he was not guilty of giving secret State Department documents to a Russian espionage agent, and then lying about it under oath, may have been permanently laid to rest as a re sult of the persistence of a Smith College professor. Professor Allen Weinstein deserves our thanks-for filing the lawsuit which forced the FBI to release 15,376 pages of its files on the Alger Hiss case, certainly one of the most famous trials of the 20th century.

Although the evidence against Alger Hiss was overwhelming enough to convince all the jurors of his guilt, the files unearthed by Professor Weinstein provide further proof. These FBI files include a new secret State Department document handcopied by Alger Hiss in 1938, plus a 1939 State Department memorandum complaining about the fact that this information had gotten immediately to the Soviet Union.

The FBI files also reveal a December 28, 1948 letter written by one of Hiss's own lawyers saying that Hiss asked him to check on an old typewriter which Hiss "remembers he gave to Pat, the son of Claudia Catlett, who used to do the washing" for the Hisses. The significance of this letter is that Hiss had three times that same month told the grand jury that he had no knowledge of how he had disposed of his Woodstock typewriter.

At the Hiss trial, typewriter experts identified copies of 64 pages of State Department documents as having been typed on his old Woodstock typewriter. Pat Catlett was brought from Alaska, where he

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was on military duty, to identify the typewriter that Hiss had given to him after Hiss had given the typed documents to Whittaker Chambers, a Soviet courier.

Other letters in the previously-unavailable FBI files corroborated the testimony of Whittaker Chambers that, although he had transmitted many State Department documents.to the Soviets, he had withheld some of them as "life preservers" for himself, and so warned the Russian agents with whom he was working. Chambers was well aware of the ability of the Soviet underground in the United States to murder or eliminate those whom it marks for liquidation.

Before Alger Hiss's 1950 conviction brought his career to an abrupt end, he had served as Secretary General of the United Nations at its charter meeting in San Francisco, and as one of President Franklin Roosevelt's top advisers at the Yalta Conference. In 1946 Alger Hiss sent a State Department memorandum to the United Nations in which he referred to the U.S. Canal Zone as "occupied territory."

He may thus have initiated the still-persisting effort by our State Department to give away the U.S. Canal to the pro-Communist dictator in Panama, although the American taxpayers bought and paid for the Canal Zone three times (first by paying Panama $10 million plus a Panama Railroad annual annuity of $250,000, later raised to $2,328,200; second by paying $166,362,173 to all the individual owners of land in the Canal Zone; and third by paying $25 million to Columbia in order to vest title "entirely and absolutely" in the United States).

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