Hiss Revises Story On Car, Typewriter

Better Recollection Now, He Explains

By WILLARD EDWARDS

NEW YORK, June 27 (CTPS): Without visible loss of composure, Alger Hiss admitted today a number of important changes in the story he gave last year concerning his mysterious relationship with Whittaker Chambers, a confessed Communist spy.

In a smooth, unhurried voice, the former State department official on trial for perjury in federal Judge Samuel H. Kaufman's court, for more than five hours responded to a cross-examination by U. S. Attorney Thomas E. Murphy.

Hiss disavowed blame for the discrepancies and contradiction unearthed by the relentless probing of the prosecutor. He insisted his recollection had improved since the grand jury last December indicted him for lying to conceal State department espionage.

Corrected Murphy's Grammar

A packed courtroom listened, fascinated, to the verbal duel between the odd antagonists—Murphy huge, red-faced, polite, and persistent, and Hiss, slender, smiling, who once corrected the prosecutor's grammar.

At the end of the day, Hiss' admissions and concessions before the jury of 10 men and two women could be summarized as follows:

1. Hiss had told the FBI and the grand jury his wife, Priscilla, had sold or given the typewriter "subsequent to 1938" to a junk shop, the Salvation Army, or a secondhand dealer.

"This was definitely a mistake," he conceded to Murphy. "I now know the typewriter was given to a Baltimore Negro family who worked for the Hisses', late in

Other Mistakes Admitted

2. "Another mistake" was confessed by Hiss in his original testimony concerning the gift of an old 1929 Ford roadster to Chambers. Although he has admitted only a casual acquaintance with Chambers as "George Crosley," a free-lance magazine writer, Hiss has admitted subletting his apartment to Chambers, lending him small sums, and giving him this automobile.

"I threw in the old car as a part of subleasing the apartment," Hiss testified last year. "That was in April, 1936. I had no need for the old car because I had purchased a new one, a Plymouth."

Hiss changed this story when confronted by Murphy with proof he hadn't obtained the new Plymouth until August and a transfer July 29, 1936. He was asked why the Cherner Motor company of Washington, appeared to be the purchaser on that date.

"I don't recall anything at all about it," said Hiss, after identifying his signature on the title certificate showing acquisition by the Cherner company. "That title must have been brought in to me in the middle of a busy afternoon and I signed it."

Reported to Sayre

3. The defendant admitted he told the grand jury only three of the four handwritten copies of secret documents, produced by Chambers in support of his story that Hiss stole papers for him, were in his handwriting. Confronted by expert testimony, he now admits, he said, that all were his.

Unable previously to explain how these memoranda might have come into Chambers' hands, Hiss now told the jury:

"I frequently wrote out notes for assistant State secretary Francis B. Sayre, my superior. I would put them in my pocket and read them to him at lunch. Afterwards, I would throw them in either my wastebasket or in Mr. Sayre's wastebasket."

[illegible] talk on [illegible] armament [illegible] and on [illegible] Russia, de[illegible] in some [illegible] State department offic[illegible] to be "vital to security" 10 years later.

Interviewed by Byrnes

The defendant testified he first had heard reports about his own alleged connections with the Communist party in 1946 from James F. Byrnes, then secretary of state.

"Mr. Byrnes told me two or three congressmen, one or two [illegible] Eugene Cox (Georgia Democrat) were going to make speeches, saying there were a lot of Communists in the State department and I was one of them," he testified. "I immediately called up J. Edgar Hoover (FBI director) to ask for a thorough interrogation. I was later questioned by one of his assistants somewhat perfunctorily."

Q.—Were you asked about your associations with Lee Pressman?

A.—I understood one of the reasons for the reports was my prior association with Pressman.

Edited Review Together

(Pressman was a former government attorney, who left to become general counsel of the CIO. He resigned that post to take a leading part in the Progressive party movement of Henry A. Wallace. He was named by Chambers as an underground Communist agent in Washington.)

Q.—Tell us what that association was?

A.—Mr. Pressman and I served together on the Harvard Law Review in college. We were in the same class and I saw a good deal of him. I saw him again in New York. Pressman went to Washington before I did. He became one chief assistant counsel to Jerome Frank (then a general counsel and now a federal judge) and I became the other. I resigned formally in 1935 and saw little of him after that.

Q.—Who recommended you to Judge Frank?

A.—I do not know.

Telegram from Frankfurter

Q.—Did you tell the FBI you were recommended either by Pressman or Justice Frankfurter of the Supreme court.

A.—It may be a fact. I doubt if I ever knew it. I did get a telegram from Mr. Frankfurter urging me to accept the appointment after Frank offered it to me.

Murphy began his cross-examination with a challenge:

"[illegible] want at this [illegible] to simplify anything you have said—to change your testimony—before I proceed? I give you this chance now."

"No," said Hiss. He smiled slightly.

Murphy said he had counted 16 occasions upon which Hiss admitted meeting Chambers in the 1936-38 period. Hiss said his estimate was 10 or 11 times. Murphy took him through the story of his acquaintance with Chambers. In the manner of attorneys, they quibbled over words and meanings.

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