



Defendant. Hiss denied perjury and remained cool and collected as . . .

The Hiss-Chambers Case

The tall, rangy, well-dressed man and the short, dumpy, rumped one had met before in the glare of the nation's news-spotlight.

Now Alger Hiss and Whittaker Chambers were before a jury of their peers in New York's Federal district court. But the issue between them was still the same: One of them was a liar. Which one was it?

About Chambers' general veracity there was little doubt—he had admitted deliberate errors of fact before the House Un-American Activities Committee last year. But still unsolved was the question of his truthfulness concerning Hiss's alleged Communist activities.

For Hiss, under indictment for perjury because he denied that he had given secret Government papers to Chambers or had even seen him after Jan. 1, 1937, the trial would probably prove whether he had been a member of a Communist spy "apparatus" as Chambers charged.

For Chambers, a confessed former Communist and until recently a \$20,000-a-year Time magazine editor,* it would prove whether his sensational testimony before the House committee was based on something more than sensation-craving.

Slash Tactics. As the first week of the trial proceeded, Hiss's razor-sharp attorney Lloyd Paul Stryker fought with every trick of the trade. The Government, he claimed, was trying to use the perjury charge to get Hiss for espionage activities which allegedly occurred in 1937 and 1938, long beyond the three-year statute of limitations. And Stryker hammered at Chambers, the Government's star witness, mercilessly. While the pudgy witness stuck to his guns about Hiss's alleged communism, Stryker scientifically sought to debase his character.

Six times, Chambers admitted, he had committed perjury, before the House committee, the New York Federal grand

OldMagazineArticles.com

The Hiss-Chambers Case



.. Chambers charged a Red tie-up but admitted lying.

jury, the FBI and State Department officials. He also admitted living with an Ida Dales in New Orleans when he was 17, and subsequently forcing his mother to accept her into her home. To this he added the sickening story of his suicide pact with his brother Richard, who carried it out alone, killing himself with illuminating gas.

High Tension. To make sure that Chambers would be under as much psychological strain as possible, Stryker stationed a psychiatrist, Dr. Carl Binger of the Cornell Medical College, in the courtroom a few feet away. Binger looked as though he had just found the specimen he had always been looking for. Eyes bright and attentive, he scribbled busily as Chambers testified.

Nevertheless, Chambers staunchly adhered to his story. He re-told the tale he gave the House committee, of receiving secret Government documents from Hiss and transmitting them to Russian agents as early as 1935. Later, he said, he introduced Hiss to a Col. Boris Bykov, Soviet espionage agent, in New York.

No Reaction. As Chambers spoke, Hiss and his wife Priscilla listened calmly. The former State Department official, until recently president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, had told the House committee he might have known Chambers in the nineteen-thirties as "George Crosley." Anything further he had to say would be said in court.