

Spring 2014

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Recommended Citation

Hatfield, Courtney (Spring 2014) "Spying On America," *Tenor of Our Times*: Vol. 3, Article 7.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.harding.edu/tenor/vol3/iss1/7>

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SPYING ON AMERICA

By Courtney Hatfield B.A.

It is a well-known fact that the Soviet Union and the United States of America shared little trust with each other during the Cold War. In fact, the lack of trust between these two countries almost led to nuclear disaster. However, the depths of that mistrust have only recently been revealed. With the releases of Alexander Vassiliev's notes on old Soviet Union Secret Police records and the Venona transcripts has come the shocking revelation of just how severely Josef Stalin mistrusted America. Before the Soviet Union and the United States were on hostile terms, before the Cold War began, and even before the start of World War II, the Soviet Union had spies in America. When the Communist Party gained popularity in the United States in the early twentieth century, the Soviet Union created networks of spies, informants, couriers, and American sources to inform Moscow of any intelligence gathered on the American government. These documents have shown the American public how extensively the Soviet Union was able to infiltrate nearly every avenue of information in the United States government and even aspects of daily life. The Soviets sent spies to America, who worked their way into government jobs and recruited members of the Communist Party of America (and even regular citizens who were sympathetic to the Soviet Union or unsympathetic towards America) to pass along information to their headquarters in Moscow.¹

There were many key people and organizations that played important roles in the undercover world from 1935 to 1989. Although America recognizes the names of many discovered spies, such as Whittaker Chambers, Alger Hiss, and the Rosenbergs, much of that undercover world is still unknown today. However, America knows that particularly from 1935 to the 1950s, the Soviet Union and its secret police used many espionage and intelligence gathering tactics to undermine the security and knowledge of the United States.

Near the end of World War II, the entire world was in disarray. Countries were trying to emerge from the depths of their war-wrecked societies and reunite, and it was obvious that Germany was near the end of its

¹ The Communist Party of America will henceforth be referred to as the CPUSA.

controlling reign. The Soviet Union had been involved in espionage within Germany during the war to anticipate the German moves and protect the Eastern Front. In fact, Stalin had his spies in all countries that he counted as his rivals because

Stalin realized that once Germany and Japan were defeated, the world would be left with only three powers able to protect their influence across the globe: the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the United States. With that in mind, Stalin's intelligence agencies shifted their focus toward America.²

Immediately, the Soviets began spying more heavily on the Americans. Josef Stalin was determined to break into every part of the government possible to gain access to any information he could use to stay ahead of the United States. At this point in time, he began to call America "the Main Adversary," a rather hostile term for a supposed ally.³ Stalin's specific instructions stated that the KGB was to coordinate the gathering of all pertinent "secret information" from the State Department "and other intelligence or counterintelligence bodies—but especially the White House."⁴

Much to the dismay of the American government, there was little the United States could do to counter the espionage. According to Kristie Macrakis, the very nature of the "Soviet Union's closed society prevented

² John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999) 20.

³ Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin. *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 175.

⁴ Allen Weinstein and Alexander Vassiliev, *The Haunted Wood: Soviet Espionage in America—the Stalin Era* (New York: Random House, 1999) 160. According to Haynes and Klehr, the United States originally had no idea that the Soviet Union was anything more than an ally in the war. During the latter years of the war, the War Department's Military Intelligence Division picked up "vague rumors of secret German-Soviet peace negotiations." Unsure of their ability to withstand such an intense fight, these government officials ordered that Soviet diplomatic telegraphs going to and from Moscow should be intercepted, decrypted, and searched for any proof of this rumor. Unfortunately, by the time the messages had been decoded, the war was finished and there was no evidence verifying this theory. But, once these messages were deciphered, there was legitimate proof that the Soviet Union had begun to spy on America. In a nutshell, the decryption of correspondence was the goal of the Venona Project. The Venona Project would come in handy throughout the entirety of the Cold War, especially in the arrest and conviction of the Rosenberg Ring. Haynes and Klehr, *Venona*, 8.

Western spies from gaining easy access to secret information,” (such as lists of Soviet spies, the information they had discovered or wished to discover, and their tactics) “whereas the United States’ open society made it a soft espionage target.”⁵ The Soviets also concentrated solely on using humans as espionage agents instead of technology. The intense fear of being caught with a camera containing incriminating evidence kept the spies on their toes. Most Soviet spies were required to commit information to memory to prevent such a dangerous situation in the event that they were caught.

In addition to these more conventional espionage tactics, there were spies who intentionally allowed themselves to be caught, “neutralizing [the CIA’s Soviet-Eastern European Division] and tying it up in knots with double agents who fed it disinformation.”⁶ This “disinformation” could be anything that was remotely false or misleading enough to shift the focus of Americans who were investigating these accusations.⁷ Between those who lied to the American government about the Soviet Union’s intelligence agents and those who actually defected and gave the government good information, the United States had no idea who to believe. Each “defector” was as credible as the next, and each was capable of lying in a convincing manner. Finally, the Soviet Union was able to convert prominent members of the American society to their espionage, which included high ranking government officials, children of important officials, and members of the CPUSA who worked in the government. Among the American citizens, “by the mid-1950s...there was a wide-spread consensus on three points: that Soviet espionage was serious, that American Communists assisted the Soviets, and that several senior government officials had betrayed the United States.”⁸

The most important players in the Cold War espionage attempts of the Soviet Union were the members of the Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti (KGB), or the Committee for State Security. Without the Secret Police of Russia working to organize the clandestine missions into the United States, none of the espionage would have occurred in the first place.⁹

⁵ Kristie Macrakis, “Technophilic Hubris and Espionage Styles During the Cold War,” *Isis* 101, no. 2 (June 2010): 379.

⁶ Macrakis, “Technophilic Hubris,” 383.

⁷ Haynes and Klehr, *Venona*, 38.

⁸ Haynes and Klehr, *Venona*, 14.

⁹ For clarification, there were many intelligence agencies in the Soviet Union. The NKVD, or Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del, preceded the KGB. The GRU (military intelligence) and the Naval GRU (naval military intelligence) also had their own missions into

With any country, including the United States, the KGB strove to influence “the policies of another government, [disrupt] relations between other nations, and [discredit or weaken] governmental and non-governmental opponents [which involved] attempts to deceive the target...and to distort the target’s perceptions of reality.”¹⁰ The KGB divided its agents into two categories: the “legal” agents and the “illegal” agents. The legal agents consisted of people who were actually allowed to be in the United States. Typically, these agents were journalists or diplomats recognized by America. Illegal agents, on the other hand, were those who were either smuggled into the country for the purpose of espionage or American citizens recruited and actively committing treason.¹¹ The KGB sent these agents into America to run the underground spy networks across the country. It is disquieting to ponder these KGB agents that could pass themselves off as American citizens, complete with a full comprehension of the English language and untraceable American accents. Typically, there was one “station chief” for each city where there was major espionage work. The station chiefs controlled what each station was permitted to do, including who they were allowed to recruit and how they gathered their information. The KGB even gave money to those it recruited. For example, when underground spy William Dodd (the brother of Soviet spy Martha Dodd and the son of the American diplomat to Germany) was running for Congress, he received \$1,000 from the KGB for his campaign fund. In short, the KGB provided money for endeavors that might lead to the spread of Communism.¹²

The KGB also tasked itself with protecting members, at least until it became too inconvenient. When American sources were identified as spies, the KGB often made plans for them to escape the country. In doing so, the KGB was keeping its own interests at heart, which usually meant protecting its agents from being caught.¹³ However, this also meant that the easiest way to protect their own interests would be to kill its spies or defectors. For

the United States. However, due to record confusion and the constant evolution of the KGB itself, many of these espionage missions are not classified as specifically belonging to one group. The KGB was over all of these intelligence groups. Therefore, for the purpose of this paper, the term “KGB” will be used when discussing any intelligence agencies in the Soviet Union.

¹⁰ Richard H. Shultz and Roy Godson, *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures in Soviet Strategy* (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey’s International Defense Publishers, 1984), 2.

¹¹ Weinstein and Vassiliev, *The Haunted Wood*, 4.

¹² Weinstein and Vassiliev, *The Haunted Wood*, 66-68.

¹³ Haynes and Klehr, *Venona*, 67.

example, Whittaker Chambers believed beyond a doubt that he would be killed after he defected and took measures against it. In the case of Elizabeth Bentley, a famous Soviet spy who gave the Soviet Union serious trouble, there were several plans discussed for eliminating her, including faking her suicide, arranging for her to be in a car accident, shooting her, or slipping her a “slow-acting poison.”¹⁴ On a larger scale, Stalin ordered the purges during the late 1930s to eliminate spies whom he believed had become too sympathetic towards the West. Hundreds of men and women in the KGB, both in the Soviet Union and in America, were called to Moscow “to face arrest, interrogation, torture, and often death.”¹⁵ This halted many operations in the United States as the leaders were taken from America.

One of the main reasons the KGB was able to infiltrate the United States was the participation of the CPUSA. Without the far-reaching help of the CPUSA, the Soviets would have been much less successful in their offensive espionage tactics. According to historians of the Soviet Union, the CPUSA “created ‘illegal’ departments charged with protecting the party’s internal security, preserving its ability to function in the event of government repression, [and] infiltrating non-Communist organizations for political purposes” during the Red Scare.¹⁶ The CPUSA was quite paranoid about its rights being taken away, so one of its main objectives of infiltration was to “influence policy” within the government, which could allow the members of the Communist Party more freedom.¹⁷ Although these underground networks did not start out participating in espionage activities, the fact that they were “underground” made it very easy for them to shift into an espionage role. In fact, before the release of Alexander Vassiliev’s notes, no one had realized how much the CPUSA was involved in espionage and treasonous acts.

Through the CPUSA, many small-time government workers were recruited to pass information from their offices to a courier who would then pass the information to Moscow. This information ranged from copied official documents to anything they had heard in the office that could be useful. Often, the members of the CPUSA who worked in government jobs were frustrated with themselves for selling out and working for a government

¹⁴ Weinstein and Vassiliev, *The Haunted Wood*, 108.

¹⁵ Weinstein and Vassiliev, *The Haunted Wood*, 153.

¹⁶ Haynes and Klehr, *Venona*, 59.

¹⁷ Whittaker Chambers, “How Alger Hiss Gave Our Secrets to Russia,” *Saturday Evening Post*, March 1, 1952, 97.

they did not believe in.¹⁸ These men and women had easy access to more information than one would expect them to have at their low-level government positions. Historian Stephen T. Usdin theorizes that passing along the information “allowed them to reconcile their jobs and beliefs, and the considerable risk reaffirmed their dedication to the Soviet Union and allowed them to feel they were contributing directly to its survival.”¹⁹ Dedicated members of the CPUSA allowed themselves to be entirely consumed by their work for the Soviet Union, regardless of personal danger. Members gave up their rights to family life, friends, even their jobs when they joined the espionage movement. Whatever the party needed, the member had to be willing to give.

Among the most-coveted sources recruited by the CPUSA were journalists. The KGB prized these sources because of their easy ability to “assist the KGB’s activities, either by providing information or by working to discredit anti-Communists.”²⁰ Journalists were already tasked with discovering information, so their jobs allowed them to effortlessly accumulate knowledge and pass it along to Moscow. The CPUSA was able to recruit several journalists to the Soviet cause, whether by openly asking them to help the KGB or by befriending the journalists, secretly using them, and covertly passing along the information they gathered from them.

In addition to using CPUSA members to act as couriers, sources, and spies in government institutions, the CPUSA also produced and distributed fake American passports to its members involved in espionage work and to the KGB agents in the United States. Because America was (and still is) a racially and culturally diverse nation, it was very easy to pass off citizens of the Soviet Union as newly naturalized American residents, whether they had a Russian accent or not. Besides that benefit, American passports were more accepted at national borders, allowing those carrying fake passports to easily move from country to country.²¹

The man most responsible for the distribution of passports was Jacob Golos. He was the man “who coordinated an underground Communist

¹⁸ One of these die-hard members of the CPUSA included Julius Rosenberg, one of the most famous Soviet spies in America.

¹⁹ Stephen T. Usdin, “The Rosenberg Ring Revealed: Industrial-Scale Conventional and Nuclear Espionage,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 11, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 99.

²⁰ Haynes and Klehr, *Venona*, 236.

²¹ Haynes and Klehr, *Venona*, 79.

network involving dozens of Washington and New York Sources.”²² Golos was also on the “CPUSA’s Control Committee, a small group responsible for imposing party discipline and rooting out and expelling individuals who were not sufficiently subservient to Moscow’s policies.”²³ A dedicated Soviet agent, Golos created a fake company called World Tourist, which funded many Communist activities and allowed Soviet spies to enter the United States fairly easily. To help with secretarial work, Golos hired Elizabeth Bentley. Eventually, despite being married, Golos fell in love with Bentley, who then took on a more prominent role in the espionage rings he controlled.

Elizabeth Bentley should have been the poster child of the American people. Her ancestors included people who had arrived in America on the *Mayflower*, men who had fought in the Revolutionary War, and Roger Sherman, who had signed the Declaration of Independence.²⁴ There are few people who have such an “American” background, yet Elizabeth Bentley betrayed her country and committed numerous acts of treason.

As the relationship between Golos and Bentley grew, Bentley became more involved in Golos’s operation. When he died of a heart attack, Bentley took over his assignment and acted as a courier and a handler.²⁵ During the course of her work, in which she learned the names and actions of many sources and agents, Bentley became more and more careless, even having meetings with sources and agents at her house.²⁶ Bentley reported that she was lonely after her lover’s death and eventually entered into a long-term relationship with Peter Heller, who was likely an undercover FBI agent.²⁷ When the KGB relieved Bentley of many of her duties and reduced her to a mere courier, Bentley snapped and decided to defect, exposing many important undercover KGB agents in America.²⁸

As a result of her defection, many spy rings and intelligence-gathering groups were forced to disband completely and avoid anyone who could be linked to Communism or the Soviet Union at all. While some of these groups were able to begin work again within two or three years, others were unable to begin work again at all. By giving the government the name

²² Weinstein and Vassiliev, *The Haunted Wood*, 84.

²³ Usdin, “The Rosenberg Ring Revealed,” 100.

²⁴ Weinstein and Vassiliev, *The Haunted Wood*, 88.

²⁵ Weinstein and Vassiliev, *The Haunted Wood*, 93.

²⁶ Weinstein and Vassiliev, *The Haunted Wood*, 100.

²⁷ Weinstein and Vassiliev, *The Haunted Wood*, 100.

²⁸ Weinstein and Vassiliev, *The Haunted Wood*, 104.

of important handlers, leaders, and organizers, Bentley effectively put a halt to the Soviet Union's intelligence movement in the United States, from which it was never effectively able to recover. Her defection statement was later corroborated by the testimony of Whittaker Chambers.

The story of Alger Hiss and Whittaker Chambers is one that is full of controversy and confusion. The account of the Chambers-Hiss case is unique in that the public knows so many intimate details surrounding the trial and their lives. It gives the world an insight into the life of a spy that one would usually not be privy to. Hiss was a prominent man with an aspiring future. He graduated from John Hopkins University and Harvard Law School. Hiss then became the protégé of Felix Frankfurter, who was eventually a Supreme Court Justice. After working in Frankfurter's office, Hiss became a clerk for Oliver Wendell Holmes, an Associate Justice. By the early 1930s, Hiss had worked his way into the Roosevelt inner-circle, and by 1936 he was an important member of the State Department. Hiss also traveled with President Roosevelt to the Yalta conference and played a role in the beginning stages of the creation of the United Nations. Finally, in 1947, Hiss was made the President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.²⁹ Before any accusations were made against him, Alger Hiss was nearly unlimited in his potential to succeed. Unfortunately, he was attracted to an underground world of secrets and treason, which led to his political and social downfall.

After being accused of spying for the Soviet Union, Hiss spent the rest of his life trying to prove his innocence. In fact, many advocates attested his alleged innocence and pushed for his recognition as a wrongly accused man. Maxwell Geiser, a literary critic and a friend of Alger Hiss, reviewed Whittaker Chambers's testimony in an attempt to save Hiss's name.³⁰ Another young man, Jeff Kisseloff, quit college to join Hiss's legal team. To this day, Kisseloff maintains Hiss's innocence (despite evidence to the contrary) and calls him "the best companion and role model" he ever had.³¹ Although Hiss was not alive when the Venona documents were made public, he very likely rolled over in his grave when the public found out that his

²⁹ James Thomas Gay, "1948: The Alger Hiss Spy Case," *American History* 33, no. 2 (June 1998): 26-27.

³⁰ Maxwell Geiser, "Maxwell Geiser on Alger Hiss," New York University Libraries, <https://files.nyu.edu/th15/public/aboutus.html> (accessed April 1, 2014).

³¹ Jeff Kisseloff, "Working for—and with--Alger Hiss," New York University Libraries, <https://files.nyu.edu/th15/public/kisselof.html> (accessed April 1, 2014).

defense was composed entirely of lies. In hindsight, it is now painfully obvious how well Hiss fooled his peers and the American government.

The nearly perfect opposite of Hiss, Whittaker Chambers was a man with a tragic early life. Chambers's parents were unhappy in their marriage, and he saved his brother, Richard, an alcoholic, from suicide twice before Richard successfully killed himself in his third attempt.³² Chambers attended Columbia University, but was either asked to leave when he wrote a "blasphemous play," or decided to drop out of his own accord to pursue a wandering lifestyle in New York. After this, Chambers was fired from his job as a librarian for the New York Public Library for stealing books. By 1925, Chambers had become a member of the CPUSA and began work on the *Daily Worker*, a Communist newspaper.³³ It is therefore not surprising that Chambers also became involved in an underground group in 1932 after his career as a Communist took off. Following his involvement in Soviet espionage, Chambers suddenly had a change of heart and left the Communist Party entirely in 1938.³⁴ Looking at their backgrounds, it is easy to see how the committees in charge of the Chambers-Hiss case initially sided with Alger Hiss. Hiss was one of their own; he had worked with the American government his entire career, while Chambers did the opposite. However, once presented with the facts, it is clear that Chambers' accusations against Hiss were true.

According to Chambers, party officials asked him to become a member of the Ware Group, an underground espionage ring led by Jozsef Peters and Harold Ware.³⁵ After visiting Russia, the Communist International gave Ware \$25,000 to invest in the underground, and the Ware Group was born. The Ware Group was under the supervision of Peters, the head of all underground groups of the CPUSA. The Ware Group was especially useful to Peters because of its successful members who were placed in valuable positions in the government and had the ability to frequently "influence

³² Whittaker Chambers, "I Was the Witness: Part 2," *Saturday Evening Post*, February 16, 1952, 68.

³³ Gay, "The Alger Hiss Spy Case" 27. According to Chambers, during this time, the CPUSA grew as the hundreds of students involved in the Communist Party graduated from college. This is the generation that grew up to create the underground espionage rings, including people like Alger Hiss and David Greenglass. Chambers, "I Was the Witness: Part 2," 21.

³⁴ Gay, "The Alger Hiss Spy Case" 27.

³⁵ Ware was a seemingly ordinary man, but he was the son of Ella Reeve Bloor, the "official 'mother' of the American Communist Party." Whether he truly had a choice in becoming a Communist with the reputation of his mother preceding him is debatable. Whittaker Chambers, "I Was the Witness: Part 3," *Saturday Evening Post*, February 23, 1952, 23.

policy at several levels.”³⁶ Among the members of the Ware Group was Alger Hiss, a particularly prominent and promising element. Peters took rising and successful members of various groups and put them in the “special apparatus,” a group Chambers would eventually lead and control. To the members of the group, Chambers was known simply as “Karl.”³⁷

As Chambers worked with the group, he became especially close to Alger Hiss and his wife, Priscilla. Chambers frequently visited with the Hisses socially, and the two families maintained a personal relationship throughout Chambers’s involvement with Communism. Hiss even allowed Chambers and his family to live in his old apartment after the Hiss family moved out, which he did until the lease ran out. Chambers also played a key role in Hiss’s career as his overseer in the Ware Group. When Hiss was offered the opportunity to join the staff of the Solicitor General of the United States, Peters and Chambers met together and agreed that it was in the CPUSA’s best interest that Hiss take the job. This action was repeated when Hiss became the assistant to the Assistant Secretary of State.

When Alger Hiss took on these new jobs, he had access to an innumerable amount of top-secret documents and paperwork. He began to take this paperwork home, take pictures of it, and pass the pictures to Chambers, who would then give the pictures over to the Communist Party. This routine changed slightly when Russian Colonel Boris Bykov from Moscow, a Soviet agent, started to supervise the Ware Group. Due to his intense paranoia, Bykov was terrified of any agents being caught with pictures. Bykov instead had Hiss bring home documents or handwritten notes, which his wife would type on their family typewriter and turn over to Chambers.³⁸ However, after doing this for several years, Chambers began to lose interest in the Party’s work.³⁹

³⁶ Chambers, “I was the Witness: Part 3,” 23.

³⁷ Chambers, “I was the Witness: Part 3,” 48.

³⁸ Chambers, “How Alger Hiss Gave Our Secrets to Russia,” 22.

³⁹ There is speculation as to why Chambers actually left the CPUSA and its underground spying network. While it is true that Chambers had become disenchanted with the ideology of the Communist Party, there are other determining factors that led to his severing of ties. The primary reason Chambers left was most likely the purges conducted in the mid 1930s. In fact, Chambers was ordered “to travel to Moscow, supposedly to brief military intelligence officials.” Like many other agents in America, Chambers ignored the summons, hoping to avoid arrest, imprisonment, or even death. Secondly, Chambers had the example of one of his own friends, John Sherman, who defected in the latter portion of 1937. Chambers used Sherman’s model to prepare his own defection. Weinstein and Vassiliev, *The Haunted Wood*, 45.

In April of 1938, Chambers did not report to a meeting scheduled with Colonel Bykov to deliver material he had collected from Hiss and Harry Dexter White.⁴⁰ He had been preparing for this day since 1937. By the time Bykov was aware that Chambers was not coming to the meeting, Chambers had secretly moved his entire family to a different house. After staying below the radar for several months, Chambers began to fear for his life. He slowly began to make friends in his new life and branch out in his community. In Chambers's mind, if he became more than a "faceless man in hiding," it would be harder for the KGB to kill him.⁴¹ Later that same year, Chambers met with the Assistant Secretary of State Adolf A. Berle, Jr. and gave up the names of Alger Hiss, Harry Dexter White, Noel Field, Laurence Duggan, and several other prominent government workers. However, this information was not actually taken seriously until it came to trial several years later in 1948.⁴²

When Chambers was subpoenaed to appear before the House Un-American Activities Committee, he refrained from calling Hiss a spy. He did, however, declare that Hiss was an active Communist, which Hiss refuted immediately. On August 5, 1948, Hiss was shown a picture of Chambers and, stating he did not know him, claimed, "If this is a picture of Mr. Chambers, he is not particularly unusual looking. He looks like a lot of people. I might even mistake him for the Chairman of this committee."⁴³ Despite this, HUAC, pushed by committee member Richard Nixon, decided to determine if Hiss and Chambers actually knew each other.

Chambers was asked many questions about Hiss's character, habits, hobbies, and family. While testifying, Chambers recalled that Hiss and his wife were avid bird watchers, and that one time they had seen a rare

⁴⁰ Harry Dexter White, a member of the Treasury Department, was a key member of the Ware Group as well. He frequently handed over Treasury documents to the CPUSA, and every week he made sure to bring home a handwritten summary of every document he had seen in his office, but had not had time to copy in full. Although he is an important figure in the Cold War, he died shortly before the Hiss case began and before he could be accused of treason. However, during the Hiss trial, Chambers let into evidence handwritten notes from White. If he had lived, his story would be much the same as that of Alger Hiss.

Chambers, "How Alger Hiss Gave Our Secrets to Russia," 22.

⁴¹ Therefore, in 1939, Chambers became a writer for *Time* and put his life as a courier and a spy behind him until a friend finally convinced him to go forward and expose members of the Ware Group who were working in the government. Chambers, "How Alger Hiss Gave Our Secrets to Russia," 97.

⁴² Weinstein and Vassiliev, *The Haunted Wood*, 48.

⁴³ Whittaker Chambers, "Why Did Hiss Think He Could Get Away With It?"

Saturday Evening Post, March 8, 1952, 86.

prothonotary warbler. Hiss, when later asked if he was a bird watcher, also admitted to seeing a prothonotary warbler. He had no way of knowing that this was the beginning of the end for his career and creditability. In the many eyewitness articles that he wrote for the *Saturday Evening Post*, Chambers explained how Hiss continued to lie throughout the hearings and eventually became so entangled in his lies that he exposed himself as a Communist and a spy. Over the course of the trial, Hiss was shown Whittaker Chambers's picture many more times. He gradually became less confident in his testimony, claiming at first that Chambers was not "completely unfamiliar," then admitting that he could be a man with bad teeth whom he knew as George Crosley.⁴⁴ At this point, Nixon arranged to have Chambers and Hiss meet face-to-face so that Chambers could be positively identified. After much stalling and attempts to dodge questions, Hiss finally agreed that he had known Chambers in the 1930s.⁴⁵

In the famous August 25th trial, Hiss was torn apart when he was caught in the lies about his old Ford Roadster. According to Chambers, Hiss signed the car over to the CPUSA. Hiss vehemently refuted this and stated that he had sold the car to Crosley. However, evidence was produced showing that Hiss had, in fact, signed the car away. The committee and the audience then began to lean towards Chambers. In a moment of desperation, Hiss released as evidence the mere idea that Chambers had been admitted into a mental hospital. Although this was in no way true, the suggestion that Chambers could be insane was enough to start a vicious campaign of rumors that damaged Chambers' reputation.⁴⁶

The truth finally emerged with the bizarre entrance of the Pumpkin Papers and the typewriter used to recreate documents Hiss brought home from work. In an effort to maintain a "life insurance" after he left the CPUSA, Chambers had hidden secret government documents and undeveloped microfilm implicating several senior officials, including Hiss

⁴⁴ Whittaker Chambers, "How Hiss Got Trapped in His Own Lies," *Saturday Evening Post*, March 15, 1952, 26, 100.

⁴⁵ Whittaker Chambers, "The Last Warning—and the Film in the Pumpkin," *Saturday Evening Post*, April 5, 1952, 32. However, in recognizing that he knew Chambers, Hiss added to this statement a threat against Chambers. If Chambers once again stated in public that Hiss was a Communist, Hiss would bring a libel suit against Chambers. To Chambers, this was a message that came directly from the CPUSA and the KGB: if Chambers did not drop his testimony, the KGB would be forced to bring consequences against him.

⁴⁶ Whittaker Chambers, "Hiss is Cornered and Fights Back," *Saturday Evening Post*, March 29, 1952, 36-37 and 127-130.

and White. Chambers had put them in a hollowed out pumpkin in the pumpkin patch at his farm for safekeeping in the event that the KGB searched his house. In addition, the typewriter used to type documents given to Chambers was found, after Hiss had lied about its origins. The typewriter was tested, and the lettering it produced matched the lettering of the files already in evidence. Because the act was after the expiration of the statute of limitations, Hiss was only charged with perjury. Although he spent the rest of his life trying to prove his innocence, the majority of the American public did not believe him. The “espionage offensive had not only uncovered American secrets, it had also undermined the mutual trust that American officials had for each other.”⁴⁷ In short, the American public was in shock over the events of this trial. No one knew whom they could trust, especially when even the government was vulnerable to infiltration.

Even with the chaos caused by the Chambers-Hiss case, there was one espionage trial that truly tore America apart. When the Rosenbergs went to trial, were convicted of espionage and treason, and sentenced to death, the entire world erupted. Screaming advocates pleaded for their release and claimed their innocence while stunned government officials realized how deeply their beloved country had been infiltrated. In hindsight, it is apparent that both Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were spies for the Soviet Union. Although the extent of their treason was not known in the 1950s, the world now has access to the account of their crimes.

While Julius Rosenberg was attending the City College of New York in the 1930s, he accumulated a group of friends devoted to the Communist Party. This was not rare among college students at the time, but Rosenberg stood by his Communist convictions even after most people denounced the party when the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany formed an alliance pact in 1939. Despite his political beliefs, and because of the “limited employment options for young men with Jewish-sounding names,” Rosenberg joined the military as an inspector.⁴⁸ Even though he had a low-level job, Rosenberg had access to nearly everything in the military factory.

⁴⁷ Haynes and Klehr, *Venona*, 13.

⁴⁸ Usdin, “The Rosenberg Ring Revealed,” 98.

This job put him in an important position for Soviet intelligence, which he officially began in 1941.⁴⁹

Once the KGB knew that Rosenberg was reliable, they entrusted him with recruiting specific targets that could benefit the Enormoz Project.⁵⁰ This included Russell McNutt, who covertly passed on blueprints and other information about the Manhattan Project, and David Greenglass, the brother of Ethel Rosenberg, who worked with the Army at Los Alamos on the Manhattan Project as well. Ruth Greenglass, the twenty-one year old wife of David, was recruited to convince her husband to pass on secrets to the Soviet Union. Both of the Greenglasses were ardent Communists and were eager to help.

Ultimately, it was David Greenglass who most severely damaged the nation. The information that he collected for the KGB expedited the Soviet attempt to create the atomic bomb, increasing the tensions of the Cold War. In total, the Rosenberg Ring, under Julius's control,

stole detailed information about techniques for manufacturing some of the most advanced military technology developed by U.S. industry since World War II, a period when the USSR's struggle for survival prevented its engineers from keeping pace with progress among its allies and enemies in computing, electronics, aviation, and a host of other technologies.⁵¹

They also gave the technology of jet engines and airborne radar equipment to the KGB. On top of this, Rosenberg collected key pieces of technology

⁴⁹ Rosenberg recruited men whom he believed were sympathetic to the cause and had easy access to materials that could prove useful to the Soviets. William Mutterperl, an engineer in the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, Joel Barr, an engineer at the Signal Corps, and Michael Sidrovich, another engineer, were all among his early recruits. Golos originally took charge of Rosenberg and the spies he had recruited during his time working for the military. Initially, Golos told the men they were collecting information for the CPUSA; however, Golos also suspected that Rosenberg and his men knew all along that they were spying for the Soviet Union and committing treason.

Usdin, "The Rosenberg Ring Revealed," 101-102.

⁵⁰ This was the code-name given to the Soviet Union's decently successful attempt to infiltrate the Manhattan Project, the building of an atomic bomb. Gregg Herken, "Target Enormoz: Soviet Nuclear Espionage on the West Coast of the United States, 1942-1950," 68.

⁵¹ Usdin, "The Rosenberg Ring Revealed," 113-114.

himself in addition to recruiting and encouraging these men to spy for the Soviets. This information was then “used against U.S. soldiers during the hottest conflicts of the Cold War, in Korea and Vietnam.”⁵²

The security and arrogance the Rosenberg Ring had acquired came crashing down when the Venona Project cracked the code on several messages discussing members of Rosenberg’s underground network. In 1950, the KGB began to make plans with the Rosenberg and the Greenglass families to flee the country. Rosenberg confirmed that both families would be ready to leave for Mexico on June 15th. However, in an ironic twist of fate, David Greenglass was arrested that very afternoon before anyone could leave. That night, he confessed to espionage, named Rosenberg, and agreed to testify against him in an effort to protect his wife, who had acted as a courier. Two days later, Julius Rosenberg was arrested.⁵³

Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, Morton Sobell (a member of the Ring), and David Greenglass were all indicted in February of 1951. During their trial, Greenglass testified against everyone, stating that Rosenberg had recruited him and that Ethel knew everything that had happened. The prosecutors coerced “the Atomic Energy Commission...to declassify some top atomic secrets so that the Government might point out the value of the information allegedly stolen by the defendants.”⁵⁴ Because their crimes were committed during wartime, capital punishment was a possible sentence for the Rosenbergs. At the end of the trial Morton Sobell was sentenced to thirty years in jail, David Greenglass was sentenced to fifteen years in jail, Ruth Greenglass was never brought to trial and the Rosenbergs were sentenced to death and executed on June 19, 1953.⁵⁵

During this time period, the Red Scare, or the fear of Communism, was prominent, and people had no idea whom to trust. The government feverishly attempted to rid itself of secret Communists, and citizens turned in their neighbors. But, despite these efforts, the Soviets still gained access to military secrets, the inner workings of the Manhattan Project, and the

⁵² Usdin, “The Rosenberg Ring Revealed,” 121.

⁵³ Usdin, “The Rosenberg Ring Revealed,” 91-143.

⁵⁴ “Spy Trial to Hear 3 Atom Scientists: Groves, Oppenheimer, and Urey Among 96 Witnesses on the Government’s List,” *New York Times*, March 1, 1951.

⁵⁵ Usdin, “The Rosenberg Ring Revealed,” 91-143.

American government.⁵⁶ During this age of paranoia and uneasy tension, no one could blindly believe that he was not in some way connected to someone involved in Soviet espionage. The new next-door neighbors could very well be the ring-leaders of an underground network. The Soviet Union knew how to obtain the information it wanted. Its intelligence team knew that “no government can function with officials dedicated to its destruction posted high and low in its foreign or any other service.”⁵⁷ Although these events barely scratch the surface of the extent of the damage caused by the Soviet Union’s intelligence agencies, it is obvious that the Soviet infiltration of America severely afflicted the relationship between the two countries and created a rift that led to one of the tensest times in the history of our nation.

⁵⁶ The Manhattan Project was a research project that created the atomic bomb during World War II. At this point in time, the project was highly confidential and shared only between America, the United Kingdom, and Canada. The Soviets were interested in the project and wanted to keep up with weapons development in America, so they planted spies in the research team to gather information.

⁵⁷ Chambers, “How Alger Hiss Gave Our Secrets to Russia,” 23.