

ments without limiting its rhetorical commitments, peacemaking is *une fausse idée claire*. It is to the diplomacy of the '90s what "low-intensity conflict" was to the Pentagon of the '80s—a term that appears to correspond to a concept, but is in fact so ambiguous as to be devoid of meaning. It is a general formula, imposed by intellectual brute force on a world that confounds generalization, a product of the mentality that sees the world as a unified place, easily policed by a neutral international guard. As President Clinton has found out, such a world exists only in the fevered imagination of Boutros-Ghali and his cohorts. If an excessive popular backlash against international engagement is to be averted, liberal internationalism needs to be rescued from liberal multilateralism—though not, one hopes, by a U.N. team.

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A historian's report.

THE HISS DOSSIER

By Maria Schmidt

In February of last year, while conducting research on the Hungarian Secret Police, I came upon a stack of aging documents among the restricted files of the Interior Ministry in Budapest. To my surprise, I found within these papers a series of transcripts that cast significant light on one of the most contentious questions of the cold war: Was Alger Hiss a Communist spy? For years after his conviction on charges of lying to the House Un-American Activities Committee, Hiss's supporters continued to maintain his innocence (and still do), claiming he was framed by the McCarthys. The Budapest files suggest that they were wrong.

The facts of the Hiss case are well-known. In the summer of 1948 the House Un-American Activities Committee accused Hiss of being a member of the American Communist underground and of espionage. The charges were shocking: Hiss, president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, had long been a senior State Department official. The HUAC's case against him was based on the testimony of Whittaker Chambers, a former member of the American Communist Party who had worked with Hiss in the State Department. Chambers, who had quit the Party after the Stalinist purges of the late 1930s, claimed that he had served as a conduit between Hiss and the Soviet secret service. As evidence, he presented the committee with documents (some of them in Hiss's handwriting) that

proved Hiss had committed high treason.

Hiss vigorously denied Chambers's accusations. In a statement to the committee he declared that he had never been a member of the Communist Party or any of its front organizations and that he had never had Communist friends. The committee and the courts found against him. In January 1950 Hiss was found guilty of perjury and sentenced to five years in prison.

As a legal matter, the case against Hiss had been decided. But questions of his guilt and the veracity of Chambers's testimony continued to fuel disputes between the left and the right. Hiss's supporters pointed to inconsistencies in Chambers's testimony, accusing Chambers of offering up Hiss to the committee in order to save himself.

But there now emerges another witness for the prosecution: Noel Havilland Field. Field had worked with Hiss at the State Department during the 1930s; at the same time he was also admittedly spying for the Soviet Union. Fearing he would be called before the HUAC, Field left for Eastern Europe in 1949, where he was soon arrested and imprisoned in Budapest in one of Stalin's purges. Before his release in 1954, Field was questioned in great detail about his work as a spy. In statements to the Hungarian Secret Police, until recently buried in secret files, he described at length his close professional and personal relationship with Alger Hiss.

Like Hiss, Field was a product of the finest schools. He studied political science at Harvard and international law at Boston University. He wrote his doctoral thesis on the League of Nations and disarmament before going to work for the State Department. In his statement to the Hungarian authorities, Field recounts his early life as a spy:

From 1927 gradually I started to live an illegal life completely separate from my official life. . . . I managed to overcome my inhibitions and took on the espionage for the Soviet intelligence service. . . . I prepared references about my colleagues, also obtained and turned over the report written and sent to New York by . . . the American ambassador to Moscow. . . . I also reported on the preparation of the Fleet Conference in London [1935-1936].

During this time, Field reports, Hiss also was working for the Soviets. Although Field didn't know it at the time, both of them reported to the same man, a Hungarian Communist named Jozsef Peters. (Chambers testified before the HUAC that he had also reported to Peters, and named Hiss and Field as being under Peters's direction.) Field first discovered that Hiss was working as a spy when, in the fall of 1935, Hiss approached him:

Hiss . . . wanted to recruit me for espionage for the Soviet Union, I did not find the right answer and carelessly told him that I was already working for the Soviet intelligence. . . . I knew, from what Hiss told me, that he was working for the Soviet secret service. . . . I drew the conclusion that Chambers was Hiss's upper contact in the secret service, too. Later it became certain, first when in Chambers's flat they found the secret material obtained by Hiss and then when . . .

Chambers's testimony made it clear that he knew of the conversation between Hiss and myself, when Hiss tried to recruit me into the secret service....

Field's Soviet contact in Washington, Hedda Massing, was furious when Field told her he had blown his cover to Hiss: "I received a stern rebuke from her," he recalls. "She did not know what her boss would say to that, with whom, by the way, I never got acquainted. A little later she told me I had done a greater damage than I would believe and that because of me the whole work had to be reorganized." (Testifying later in the Hiss trial, Massing reported that she was introduced to Hiss at a dinner party at Field's. Massing asked Field to introduce her to Hiss because she wanted to complain to him for trying to tempt Field into his own organization. Of course, she said, she was not truly upset with Hiss, since "we both worked for the same boss.")

Hiss wasn't the only one Field told about his secret life. In fact, he was dangerously talkative about his work and repeatedly revealed himself to others, including several prominent German Communists:

In 1935 I revealed myself to Alger Hiss. In 1942 I told Maria Weiterer and Paul Merker; then, in 1948 in Warsaw [I told] Jo Silva, an Indian journalist, about my secret commission.... I said the same to Paul Berz, too.... In December 1945 I talked to Max Bedacht to clarify my membership.

Field's indiscretions put him at risk. By the mid-1930s, it was widely known that he was a Communist. He was one of the first to be branded publicly by the HUAC. Field became more and more worried about his vulnerability; he moved to Europe to take a job at the League of Nations, but feared (rightly) that he would be extradited to the United States to appear before the committee. "I was often in a panic because they brought me news [in 1935] that I would be accused at the Congress," he recalls in the interviews. His anxiety increased as, one by one, his Soviet contacts betrayed the cause and testified against their former comrades. General Walter Krivitsky, a top Soviet intelligence officer who famously defected in 1937, singled out Field as a spy, as did Massing, who turned against the Soviets at the end of the '30s.

In 1940 Field's Communist activities cost him his job at the League of Nations. Field reports that virtually alone among his friends, Hiss was still willing to help him: "In 1940 I received a telegram from Alger Hiss, my friend in Washington, who was then at a high post in the State Department, that he had recommended me as an assistant to the newly appointed governor of the Philippines." But the job fell through, he says, "due to the opposition of certain circles."

The previous summer, certain it was just a matter of time before he would be exposed by the committee, Field traveled to the United States to seek Hiss's help.

From the press I learned that Krivitsky was hanging around in Washington and I had to be prepared that he might reveal me. Since Hiss, in theory, knew all about me, I could inform him, without much breaching the law of secrecy,

that I was in danger.... We agreed that if he got any information about it, he would send me warning, but no such warning ever came.

Field's Soviet contacts had cut him off. He didn't hear a word for four years. Finally, in 1943 he received a visit from an operative in Switzerland.

He asked me whether my earlier political views had remained the same, and if I was willing to work for the Soviet Union again. I gave a positive answer.... He instructed me to break all my party contacts and live like an apolitical man. He also asked me to build good relationships with the employees of the American consulate and other Americans.

This meeting, however, was not followed by any other. The Soviets had become increasingly suspicious of Field. All of Field's former contacts had turned against the Party; naturally, the Soviets were wary of Field, too. And Field didn't help matters. Feeling insecure because of the loss of his Soviet contacts, he told anybody within earshot that he was a Soviet spy. In a letter to her Hungarian comrades, Maria Weiterer would later remark:

In 1943 in Switzerland Noel Field told me how happy he was that at last a Soviet comrade had appeared with whom he had agreed that Noel would get instructions from him. He was deeply depressed when the comrade did not turn up again.

Field's depression turned to panic when, in 1949, Hiss was summoned to appear before the HUAC.

When I learned about the American attack—I think it was on October 17—I became hysterical.... We avoided all contact with Americans, since we were expecting a writ from the HUAC. The door and the telephone were answered only by my wife. I avoided even the surrounding of the consulate. Apart from this I spent all my time reading the public communiques of the committee.... My plan was not to live in a Western European country from where the American authorities could force me back to America. I was afraid that I would be convicted for espionage.

Field reports that he didn't fear merely for himself, but for Hiss also.

I was afraid I might harm others, primarily my friend Alger Hiss, if I returned after the attack of the HUAC. Alger defended himself at the committee with great intelligence; he had been trained as a lawyer and knew all the phrases and tricks. I, on the other hand, had no experience.... I did not trust myself enough to stand in front of my accusers and shout "innocent" in their faces.... I also understood the same from a short letter from Hiss, who obviously could not write openly.

Field decided to move to Eastern Europe and try to find work in Czechoslovakia, East Germany or maybe Poland. In these countries dozens of his friends, comrades and contacts were in important party and governmental posts. He knew people there whom he had met during the war as the head of the Voluntary Service Committee, and whom he had supported financially, so he could expect them to be helpful. He visited his friends one after the other, but discovered he was not welcome.

On May 11, 1949, in Prague, the Soviet and the Hun-

garian State Security Authorities arrested Field and transported him to Hungary, where he was to become the principal target in one of Stalin's show trials. The operation was carried out by no less than Fiodor Bielkin, head of the Central-Eastern European section of the Soviet State Security, and the deputy head of the Hungarian State Security Authority.

After Field disappeared, his wife, Herta, his brother, Hermann, and his adopted daughter, Erika, also disappeared behind the iron curtain. Hermann was arrested in Warsaw on August 22. Four days later Herta was colared in Prague and transported to Hungary; Erika was caught in East Berlin, convicted by the Soviet military court and sent to Vorkuta prison camp. "Confidential work," it was out, was a family tradition with the Fields. His mother, wife and sister-in-law all worked for the Russians. The Soviets silenced them all, together with dozens of others who had known Field, because they wanted to get rid of everybody who knew about his secret work.

For five years, Field was held in isolation in a Hungarian prison, without sentence or trial. In an ironic twist, both Field and Hiss were released from prison on the same day, a coincidence that Field remarked he found "disturbing." Field applied for asylum in Hungary, and lived there until his death in 1970 at the age of 60.

In addition to the many references Field makes to Hiss in the Budapest documents, there are copies of letters exchanged between the two men. Just as Hiss had tried to help his friend and comrade when Field had lost his job, Field, after his release from prison, tried to help Hiss in some way. In July 1957 Field wrote a letter to Hiss, offering to compose a public statement declaring that Hiss was not a Communist or a spy. The essence of the letter is as follows:

I do not know whether a statement from me at this time can do more harm than good, in view of the renewed notoriety surrounding my name. Unless and until I hear from you, I shall maintain silence with regard to the Massing testimony. My suggestion—if you agree—would be to use some suitable occasion . . . to make a public statement along the following lines: I wish to state emphatically that the testimony (of Hedda Massing) was perjured from the beginning to the end. No meeting in my apartment between Hedda Massing and Alger Hiss ever took place, nor to the best of my knowledge, anywhere else. The alleged subject matter of the conversation is a pure fabrication. . . . My definite personal knowledge of the perjured character of this particular bit of evidence is the clearest proof to me—aside of my experience of your personality and outlook—of the falsehood of the rest of the testimony on which you are convicted.

Hiss replied in a handwritten letter, also contained in the archives:

Dear Noel,

. . . It was pleasant to hear from you after so many years and to gather that both you and Herta are well and, despite all you have been through, that you have retained your objectivity and your sympathy for others.

. . . I took up with my lawyers your offer to put your statement in affidavit form or to make it public; they feel that it isn't necessary at this present time. I personally find it hard

to believe that any sensible person took Mrs. Massing's testimony about me seriously at the time.

The existence of these letters is not new. Field's letter to Hiss has long been held up by Hiss's supporters as evidence that Field knew Hiss was innocent and was offering to correct a wrong. However, in light of Field's admission to the Hungarian authorities that Hiss had indeed tried to recruit him and had spoken about it with Hedda Massing, it is now clear that Field's letter was intended as a ruse, part of the Soviet disinformation campaign on Hiss's behalf. In fact, there are several drafts of Field's letter in the Budapest archive; the Soviets reworked it several times before allowing it to be mailed. This wasn't the first time Field had had his writing "improved" by the Party. When Field gave a political statement as part of his requirements to gain political asylum in Hungary, the minister of the interior appointed a committee to rework the paper until it met with official approval:

It is the task of the committee appointed by the minister of the interior to study and reconstruct the draft written by Noel Field, according to the following aspects: 1) The statement has to be more decisive, more concrete, more to the point. 2) Should condemn the politics of the United States more sharply. 3) The condemnation of Allan Dulles, who carries on with his dangerous politics, should be supported by sufficient evidence. 4) The Marxist phraseology, however, should be avoided. . . .

Both Field and Hiss knew very well that their correspondence was read and copied at both ends. Field was under extremely close surveillance. His servants were plants, his telephone was bugged and his mail opened. The political leadership considered Field such an important person that his every move had to be approved by officials of the party and the government.

Invariably, some Hiss supporters will contend that the documents contained in the Budapest archive are Soviet forgeries, or that Field's statement was coerced. But there is no reason for doubt on either count. Field knew that his testimony to the Hungarians was being reviewed by the State Security Authority. He couldn't claim he or anyone else had worked for the Soviet Union if they had not, since the Russians and the Hungarians easily could have checked up on it.

As for the Soviets fabricating the documents, remember that at the time of Field's confession, the Soviets were conducting a massive public campaign protesting that Hiss was innocent. They had nothing to gain by creating documents that would undermine their effort to keep the truth from getting out. Nearly a half-century later, however, they are no longer around to prevent it.

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