

March 25, 1946

MEMORANDUM

021703

Mr. Alger Hiss was interviewed at his request at the Federal Bureau of Investigation on March 25, 1946, at 2:30 P. M., at which time he furnished the following information:

Honorable James F. Byrnes, Secretary of State, spoke to Hiss regarding the report of two separate committees "on the Hill" which had listed persons belonging to subversive groups and both had listed Hiss. It was Hiss' recollection that the two committees might possibly have been the House Committee on Un-American Activities and a Subcommittee of the House Military Affairs Committee. He stated that Mr. Byrnes indicated that one of these committees had working for it a former Agent of the FBI.

At that time Mr. Byrnes asked Hiss about possible membership in the National Lawyers Guild and about his association with Lee Pressman. Hiss stated that he told Mr. Byrnes that he used to know Pressman very well but had had no contacts with him recently. He also mentioned to Mr. Byrnes that he had been interviewed several years ago by a representative of the FBI with regard to alleged membership in subversive organizations. Mr. Byrnes advised Hiss that he had discussed this matter with the Attorney General and with the Director of the FBI.

Hiss stated that Lee Pressman was a classmate of his at Harvard Law School and had served on the Harvard Law Review with him. After graduation, Hiss had seen little of Pressman until they both were employed by the Department of Agriculture. Jerome Frank had selected Hiss for employment in the Department of Agriculture either because of a recommendation by Pressman or by Felix Frankfurter, who was a former law professor of Hiss'. During the time that Pressman and Hiss were employed by the Department of Agriculture, they were very close, but after Pressman left to go with the CIO, Hiss saw practically nothing of him.

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With regard to membership in subversive organizations, Hiss advised that he was not much of a joiner but could have been on the mailing lists of organizations of various kinds, but he was unable to say whether this was a fact. He does recall that for a period of five or six months prior to his employment with the Department of Agriculture, he was a member of the International Juridical Association, which he characterized as a small group interested in labor law. Hiss denied that he was ever a member of the Washington Committee for Democratic Action and did not believe that his wife was ever a member. He was of the impression that his wife could have been a member of the League of Women Shoppers because he thought that some of her friends had been members of that organization. She also could possibly have belonged to some grocery cooperative in Georgetown. Other than these two

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organizations, he was unable to say to what groups his wife, Frisclia
Conner Nelson ~~is~~, could have belonged, although he did recall
that his mother, Mrs. Mary Niss, who resided in Baltimore, wrote
several years ago stating she had joined some group, the name not re-
called by him at this time.

With reference to specific instances which have occurred to
Niss as possibly prompting reports about him, he mentioned the following:

While in San Francisco at the United Nations Conference on
International Organization, he was advised of a report received by the
FBI that two individuals connected with a Spanish Refugee Aid organiza-
tion, name not recalled, who had called on Niss officially, had reported
back to their organization that Niss had advised them on certain matters.
Niss stated he checked his records and found that Frederic Kirckway had
sent two people, one of whom was a local lawyer, who had a resolution
regarding Franco, to Niss' office to find out certain procedural matters.
Niss stated that he advised these two individuals that he couldn't
handle the matter and explained to them the procedural limitations of
the secretariat of the UNICIO. Their resolution regarding Franco was
later introduced by the Mexican Government representatives, to the best
of his recollection.

Another instance which came to his mind was told him by his
former chief in the State Department, Charles Hornbeck, who is now the
Ambassador to the Netherlands. At the time Niss first came into
Hornbeck's office, Hornbeck told him that someone, name unknown to Niss,
had stated that Niss was "a red". Niss stated that Hornbeck paid no
attention to this report.

During the past year and a half or two years, since the
Quarantone Oaks Conference, many employees of the State Department have
made speeches to various groups at the instructions of their superiors
in the State Department. One of the individuals making such speeches
has been Niss. To his knowledge there have been accusations that
State Department representatives have been "whitewashing the Russians".
Niss thinks there may have been some such allegations regarding him.

In July, 1945, according to Niss, a friend connected with
Reader's Digest advised him that Isaac Longevine had written an article
claiming that at the Yalta Conference, Niss had persuaded the late
President Roosevelt to agree to the admission of the Ukraine and Byelo-
Russia to the United Nations at a meeting where Roosevelt, Niss and
Stalin were present. Niss said that this was a fabrication because he
never met with Roosevelt and Stalin alone, and besides he does not
speak the Russian language.

by _____
for _____
date _____
initials _____
Mr. Tolson _____
Mr. E.A. Tamm _____
Mr. Clegg _____
Mr. Glavin _____
Mr. Ladd _____
Mr. Nichols _____
Mr. Rosen _____
Mr. Tracy _____
Mr. Carson _____
Mr. Egan _____
Mr. Gurnea _____
Mr. Hendon _____
Mr. Pennington _____
Mr. Quinn Tamm _____
Mr. Nease _____
Miss Gandy _____

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Hiss stated that Mr. Byrnes had mentioned William ~~X~~ Stone, now in the Department of State, as another individual whose name was mentioned by the two House Committees. Hiss advised he had known Stone for a long time but knew of no Communist Party connections on the part of Stone. He did recall, however, that for a year or two he had been associated with Stone, then a representative of the Foreign Policy Association, in a supper club headed by a Mrs. ~~X~~ Moorehead, also with the Foreign Policy Association, who lives on R Street in Washington, D. C., and which consisted of representatives from various government departments who met once or twice a month and heard various speakers on international affairs. He recalls that Lee Pressman represented labor in this supper club and possibly Mordecai ~~X~~ Ezekiel represented the Department of Agriculture. He recalls that there was someone from the Department of Interior but was unable to recall the identities of other individuals with whom he met during this two-year period. The meetings, according to Hiss, were often held in the old Evergreen Cafeteria in the Department of Agriculture Building.

Hiss was questioned specifically whether he was at this time or had at any time in the past been a member of the Communist Party and he emphatically stated he had not. He was asked specifically whether he had had any association with the Communist Party at any time in the past and he denied any such contact or association. He was asked specifically whether he had any friends whom he knew to be members of the Communist Party and advised that he knew of no friends who were members of this Party. However, he had heard many people say that Lee Pressman was either a Party Member or followed the Party line, but Hiss did not know this to be a fact.

Mr. Hiss was specifically asked whether he had any association with any person or persons who might be members of any subversive organizations which association might have caused the belief to exist that he likewise was a member of any such subversive organization, and he stated that he knew of no association on his part with any persons which would lead to this conclusion.

- Tolson
- E. A. Tamm
- Clegg
- Coffey
- Glavin
- Ladd
- Nichols
- Rosen
- Tracy
- Carson
- Egan
- Gurnea
- Harbo
- Pennington
- Quinn Tamm
- Nease
- [unclear]

LW:DS
DML: DS

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