

THE HISS-CHAMBERS CASE

By ISAAC DON LEVINE

[Eight months before the Chambers-Hiss affair made front-page news across the nation, the editor of Plain Talk, in the issue of December 1947, alerted the public to the forthcoming revelation of a great spy ring in the U.S.A. Without naming Alger Hiss, the editor described him as "one who had played a leading role at Yalta and in organizing the United Nations," and who "delivered confidential papers to Communist agents who microfilmed them for dispatch to Moscow." The article forecast the early outbreak of a "major political quake," which occurred the following August. It reached a climax four months later when Chambers produced the celebrated "pumpkin papers." During this exciting period, the editor, who had been closely following the affair from its inception, reported his experiences in a series of articles that are here reproduced exactly as originally printed. There is one item in the account that calls for correction: the British code clerk named King, exposed by Krivitsky as a Soviet spy, was not executed in the Tower of London as first reported; he was given a ten-year term in prison. The six related installments included in this chapter originally appeared as "Stalin's Spy Ring" in December 1947; "The Inside Story of Our Soviet Underworld" in September, October, and November 1948; "Sequel to Chambers' Story" in January 1949; and "Ten Years Too Late" in February 1950.]

I

THE COMING sensational case involving a great Soviet spy ring in the United States, as a result of a grand jury investigation which has been going on in New York for several months, is merely a continuation of the famous Canadian inquiry into Communist espionage. When Prime Minister Mackenzie King visited President Truman in October 1945 to acquaint him with the shocking revelations made by Igor Gouzenko, the Soviet Embassy code clerk, he was instrumental in starting the FBI machinery to ferret out evidence of the Soviet underground networks on the North American continent.

It became clear to President Truman, after Mackenzie King's visit, that the Canadian case, in which a score of Soviet officials and Communist Party stalwarts figured, was but a small section of a vast secret beehive operating from the Panama Canal to Alaska. Several compartments of this have been probed by the grand jury, sending shivers through the entire hierarchy of the American Communist Party, and portending something like a major political 'quake upon the publication of the facts uncovered. These will show that:

Several of the topmost officials of the Communist Party in this country were acting as agents of Stalin's secret service, engaged in recruiting spies and filching state documents;

The intricate espionage organization in which more than one hundred scientists and clerical workers were engaged, since the beginning of 1943, in gathering secret information about our atomic development, leading to the transmission of uranium-235 to Russia, was under the direct supervision of avowed Communist Party leaders.

The secret plans and blueprints of our B-36 Superfortress, long before its launching and going into action, had mysteriously and unaccountably found their way to the Treasury Department and into the hands of a ranking official there, whose function was in the field of international finance, and that they later passed into the hands of Soviet agents;

Several of the highest officers of the old National Labor Relations Board were clandestine members of the Communist Party and formed a secret spy "centre" in Washington;

Certain high and trusted officials in the State Department, including one who had played a leading role at Yalta and in organizing the United Nations, delivered confidential papers to Communist agents who microfilmed them for dispatch to Moscow;

Certain leading lights in the councils of the CIO and the PCA were deeply involved in espionage and other illicit activities;

One of the ghostwriters for a prominent United States Southern senator of pronounced pro-Soviet sentiments was an underground operative of the network;

Various disguised quarters were used by the ring in Washington, New York, and elsewhere—such as a violin studio, a jewelry shop in a fashionable district, and a documentary film establishment—for the purposes of transacting espionage business, transmitting microfilmed information, and receiving funds from couriers.

II

THE SHOCK to which the country was treated only last month, when Whittaker Chambers, a senior editor of *Time* magazine, and Elizabeth T. Bentley, Vassar graduate, revealed some of the inside operations of Soviet espionage in Washington, was a nine-year-old tale to this writer.

When Mr. Chambers disclosed to the world that the facts in his possession had been called to the attention of President Roosevelt's secretary, the late Marvin H. McIntyre, and that they were later detailed to Adolf A. Berle, Jr., then Assistant Secretary of State and White House confidant, he broke the seal of official secrecy hiding some exciting pages of current history.

My intimate contact with that fantastic and almost incredible global political underworld of which Chambers and Bentley had been denizens in the United