

the Hiss case," he later explained. "But the matter was still in court . . . the first trial was a hung jury. So as far as I was concerned the matter of espionage was still an open question." Besides, Weyl himself had not participated in espionage and knew nothing about it. As for the activities he did know about, "I was not going to reveal my involvement. . . . I did not desire any career as a former Communist. So I approached [the subject] as if I had no personal knowledge of Communist party membership."<sup>7</sup>

Finally, in the fall of 1950, ten months after Hiss's conviction, Weyl had gone to the FBI and confessed his membership in the Ware unit. He repeated his testimony before the McCarran Committee in February 1952, a month after Hiss had filed his appeal. As a charter member of the Ware Group, Weyl had attended "fifteen to twenty" unit meetings at Helen Ware's violin studio and was able to name his other accomplices. They included Alger Hiss, whom Weyl recalled as a dues-paying and doctrinaire Party member, "a true believer, a deeply committed Communist."<sup>8</sup>

One last fling at establishing Hiss's innocence came in 1992, when selected Moscow archives were unlocked and opened to researchers. At the request of Alger Hiss, then aged eighty-eight, General Dmitri A. Volkogonov, chairman of the Russian government's military intelligence archives, authorized a search of KGB files and then sent Hiss a letter exonerating him on the basis of available files, none of which indicated Hiss had ever spied for Soviet intelligence. Within weeks, however, Volkogonov sheepishly admitted his search had been cursory and many relevant files had been destroyed. He did not offer to check again. Other Russian researchers, diligently combing intelligence files, privately reported that after Volkogonov's blunder officials had scoured the archives and removed all files pertaining to Chambers and Hiss.<sup>9</sup>

But documentation on Hiss did turn up in a Communist archive. In 1993 Maria Schmidt, a Hungarian historian working in the files of the Interior Ministry, in Budapest, came upon the dossier of Noel Field, who had been imprisoned in Budapest in 1949 after his defection behind the Iron Curtain. Released in 1954, Field was debriefed by Communist police, to whom he gave a detailed accounting of his secret work in the United States and of his close friendship with Alger Hiss, a fellow agent. According to Field, Hiss had tried to recruit him into the underground