

COPY

New York 7, New York

March 28, 1946

~~PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL~~

Director, FBI

Re: WHITTAKER CHAMBERS
INTERNAL SECURITY - R

Dear Sir:

On March 26, 1946, Mr. J. C. STRICKLAND of the Bureau telephonically advised Mr. CONROY that the Director was desirous of having WHITTAKER CHAMBERS of the editorial staff of Time Magazine, interviewed in connection with information previously furnished by CHAMBERS concerning ALGER HISS of the State Department. It was desired that this office ascertain whether CHAMBERS would object to the use of his name in the further development of information concerning HISS and his activities and also to determine if CHAMBERS would be willing to testify as to his knowledge of HISS' connections with the Communist Party. It will be recalled that WHITTAKER CHAMBERS was interviewed by ADOLF BERLE of the State Department during September of 1939 at which time CHAMBERS revealed certain information concerning the Communist underground movement in Washington, D. C. and identified certain persons actively associated with the Communist Party. Among those named was ALGER HISS. A typewritten copy of Mr. BERLE's notes was furnished to the New York Office and the information therein concerning HISS is characterized as follows:

"Alger Hiss, Ass't. to Sayre - CP - 1937
Member of the Underground Com. - Active
Baltimore boys -
Wife - Priscilla Hiss - Socialist -
Early days of New Deal.

"Donald Hiss, (Philippine Advisor) Member of C.P. with
Pressman & Witt - Labor Dep't. - Ass't.
to Frances Perkins - Party wanted him there -
to send him as arbitrator in Bridges trial -
Brought along by brother.

CHAMBERS was first interviewed by Agents of the New York Office on March 13, 1942 and the result of this interview is set forth in the New

PROPERTY OF FBI

This ~~confidential~~ report and its contents are loaned to you by the FBI and are not to be distributed outside of agency to which loaned.

Letter to the Director
NY 65-6766

March 28, 1946

"When HISS arrived, they had dinner together at his home and then talked with him all night long in an effort to persuade him to leave the Party. He stated that with tears streaming down his face, HISS had refused to break with the Communist and had given as his reason for not breaking his loyalty to his friends and principles. CHAMBERS stated his reason in going to HISS in order to get him to break away from the Communist Party was that he personally thought an awful lot about HISS and considered him an intelligent and decent young man whose better judgment should have led him to break with the Communist movement. CHAMBERS pointed out in his opinion, one of the strongest reasons for HISS' maintaining contact with the Communist Party was the fanatical loyalty to the Communist Party on the part of his wife."

"DONALD HISS is a brother of ALGER HISS, and otherwise not identified by CHAMBERS."

The interview of CHAMBERS as requested by Mr. STRICKLAND was delayed it having been learned that Mr. CHAMBERS was at his country place near Westminster, Maryland and would not return to his offices in New York City until March 28, 1946. On March 28, 1946, CHAMBERS was interviewed by Special Agent THOMAS G. SPENCER in his office, Room 2016, 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York City.

After preliminary discussion relative to information previously supplied by CHAMBERS concerning HISS, he related that his actual knowledge of HISS' activities concerned the period shortly preceding 1937 and he was unable to elaborate on any information concerning HISS' connection with the Communist Party or Communist front organizations other than what he reported at the time he was interviewed on March 13, 1942 and again on May 10, 1945. The information developed from CHAMBERS in those two cases are set forth above. He recalled that after 1937 he was of course no longer actively associated with the Communist Party and since he was actively engaged in his association with the Time Magazine he had lost all contact with ALGER HISS and the only information that he has concerning him is that which has appeared recently in the various newspapers which have attempted to attach him in some way to the Communist Party. He stated that as a matter of fact he has absolutely no information that would conclusively prove that HISS held a membership card in the Communist Party or that he was an actual dues paying member of the Communist Party even while he was active prior to 1937. He volunteered that he knew that in 1937 HISS was favorably impressed with the Communist movement and was of the present opinion that HISS still was of the same beliefs. He indicated that he did not

Letter to the Director
NY 65-6766

March 28, 1946

have any documentary or other proof to substantiate this belief and based it solely upon comments made by various Washington and New York newspaper writers.

In view of the information supplied by Confidential Informant [redacted] whose identity is known to the Bureau, on March 18, 1946, indicating that HOWARD RUSHMORE of the New York Journal-American is alleged to have stated that "some Commie in the State Department had released the information and that he wanted to go on record that it was Alger Hiss. That Hiss was probably running the State Department and that Rushmore had a witness who worked at Time Magazine who would get on the witness stand and state that Hiss paid dues to the Communist Party for a period of three years", CHAMBERS was again asked if in any of his past activities he had any documentary evidence or any independent recollection that HISS was a dues paying member of the Communist Party. He again stated that he had no such information and that if he did have this information he would be more than glad to supply it to this Bureau. He further remarked in previous interviews with Agents of this office that he had never purposefully held out any information and had always been forthright in relaying any information that he had in which the Bureau had shown an interest.

CHAMBERS was then asked whether he would object to the use of his name in the further development of information concerning ALGER HISS' alleged Communist activities and he was desirous of knowing if we had any particular person in mind who we intended interrogating in which the use of his name might be beneficial. He was informed that at the present time we did not have anyone in mind but were simply desirous of knowing whether he would object to the use of his name in the event an investigation of HISS' activities was instigated sometime in the future. He then stated that if a certain amount of discretion was used in the use of his name he did not see how he could object to this procedure. He volunteered that he of course had made a mistake in his youth in embracing Communism and that ever since 1937 when he broke away from this type of activity, he felt that he owed a serious debt to this country and that the only way that he could pay it off was to do everything in his power to expose Communism in this country. He stated that he has since 1937 denounced Communism to the point that whenever his name is mentioned in certain circles he is referred to as a "red baiter". He volunteered that in his own organization there are some people who have a liberal attitude towards Russia and that his name is "poison".

CHAMBERS then stated that if the Bureau was of the opinion that at this time the use of his name might be beneficial in obtaining definite information

Letter to the Director
NY65-6766

March 28, 1946

regarding HISS' Communist connections he would not object to this procedure; however, he strongly suggested that if we did contemplate this that we so inform him. He again stated that this he would leave to the discretion of the Bureau.

He was then questioned as to whether he would be willing to testify as to information he had previously supplied the Bureau with reference to his knowledge of HISS' activities and any subsequent information regarding HISS that came to his attention. He replied that if he were called to testify he did not see how he could refuse to do so. He remarked, however, that he was hopeful that if this eventuality came to pass the hearing would be a closed one. In conclusion he stated that he has a great amount of respect for the confidence which the Bureau has exhibited in information which he has already furnished. He stated that he is of course extremely anxious to keep his position with Time Magazine and would appreciate it if the Bureau would consider his position if the Bureau decided to use his name in connection with an investigation of HISS or in the event he was called upon to testify. CHAMBERS was receptive, cordial and cooperative and it is felt that if the Bureau decided to conduct an investigation of HISS' Communist activities that CHAMBERS will agree to anything within reason.

Very truly yours,

E. E. CONROY
SAC

cc 65-14603