

not an attorney and, as Mr. Bumble said in *Oliver Twist*, “the law is a ass—a idiot.”

Alger Hiss and his supporters appealed his conviction and demanded a retrial. Special Agent Bert Zander of the FBI brought us the disagreeable news that, if that should occur, I would probably be the chief witness for the United States, since Whittaker Chambers’ weak heart could prevent him from testifying. He added that Hiss probably knew that the technique of identifying typewriters as the source of documents had improved so rapidly that the case for his defense was bound to collapse. Zander believed that Hiss did not want a third trial, but had to seem to want one to appease his zealous supporters. He added the interesting news that the hotel room in which the Hisses stayed during the second trial had been bugged by a government agency which he did not identify. The wire tap revealed that Alger said to his wife that the situation was hopeless and he had decided to change his plea to guilty. Priscilla Hiss did everything in her power to persuade him to stand firm. She brought Lee Pressman into the discussion and these two zealous Communists made him decide to bite the bullet, that is to say to continue lying.

The Hiss case aroused as much passion in the United States as the Dreyfus Affair had in France half a century earlier. In general, the liberal establishment regarded the innocence of Alger as a holy cause.

One day in 1950, I ran into Norman Thomas, the distinguished leader of the dwindling American Socialist Party. He congratulated me for having testified before a Senate committee and added that he was always amazed at the fervent liberal support for Hiss. Alger Hiss had done more to betray and tarnish the cause of liberalism than any other American; if they were capable of logical thought, true liberals would despise him.

In 1950, I published a history of treason in the United States. It received favorable reviews in the organs that counted. I was pleasantly surprised when President Truman told reporters he was reading my book and liked it. Both Republican and leftwing newspapers headlined this item “Truman Reads Book.” The