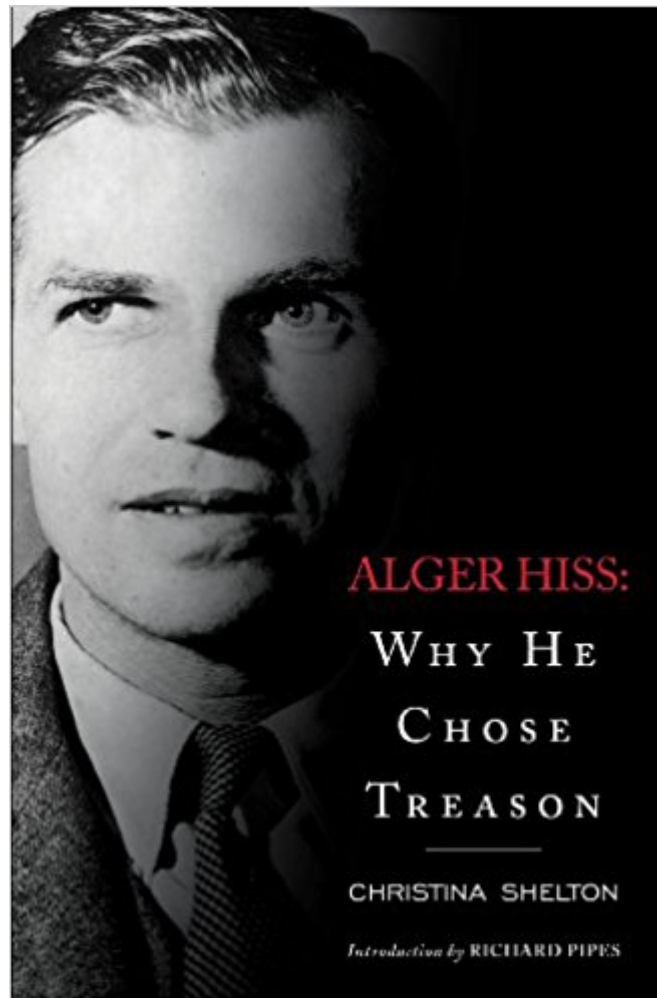




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Alger Hiss: Why He Chose Treason



Synopsis

A definitive and comprehensive biography of infamous Soviet spy Alger Hiss by a former U.S. Intelligence and analyst who confirms both Hiss's guilt and how deeply the Soviets had infiltrated the government during and post WWII. In 1948, former U.S. State Department official Alger Hiss was accused of being a Soviet spy. Because the statute of limitations on espionage had run out, he was convicted only of perjury. Decades later, after the Hiss trial had been long forgotten by most, archival evidence surfaced confirming the accusations: a public servant with access to classified documents had indeed passed crucial information to the Soviets for more than a decade. Yet many on the American Left still consider Hiss an iconic figure, an innocent victim accused of unsubstantiated crimes. They prefer to focus on the collectivist ideals Hiss stood for, rather than confront the reality of a man who systematically and methodically betrayed his country. Former U.S. Intelligence analyst Christina Shelton employs an in-depth knowledge of Soviet intelligence affairs as well as recently released Hungarian and KGB archival material to shine a fresh light on one of the most famous espionage cases. The story is dramatic, but Shelton's analysis goes beyond sensationalism as she explores both the ideological motivation behind Hiss's behavior and the lasting influence it has had on U.S. foreign policy. Why exactly were the intellectual elite so determined that Hiss was innocent? His accuser, Time magazine senior editor Whittaker Chambers, originally Hiss's Soviet handler, presented compelling written evidence. However, the intelligentsia were intent on supporting one of their own. They ignored the facts, a willful blindness that helped contribute to a polarization still in place in our country today. Thirty years of intelligence analysis gives Shelton the expertise to approach the story from many different angles, especially:

- Her persuasive argument that Communism and Fascism are not polar opposites, as has so long been claimed, but highly similar ideologies.
- How Hiss's central role at the Yalta Conference and the founding of the United Nations are examples of the significance of Soviet intelligence recruitment of high-level Americans who could influence U.S. foreign policy in their favor.
- Why the silence surrounding the implications of Hiss's espionage continues, and why apologists fear that smearing his name would undercut New Deal policies and the United Nations.

Shelton doesn't just detail the body of evidence pointing to Hiss's guilt; she suggests new layers of meaning in light of the current political landscape. Today, the importance of understanding Hiss's ideological commitment has never been more vital. His advocacy of collectivism and internationalism still resonate among the political elite, making this book an important and timely analysis of American thought at this critical juncture in our country's life.

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Customer Reviews

Alger Hiss was a prominent State Department analyst accused of spying for the Soviet Union and working to favorably dispose American foreign policy towards the Soviets during the Roosevelt and Truman administrations. Hiss was convicted of perjury and sent to prison for lying to a Congressional Committee about his involvement in the American Communist Party. Hiss thus played a larger-than-life role in Cold War history: * He was the "Valerie Plame" of his day, a publicity magnet and a proxy for partisan political intrigues. Author Christina Shelton writes: "By virtue of his intelligence and highly successful academic career at Johns Hopkins University and Harvard Law School, as well as his distinctive charming manner, grace, good looks, and sophistication, he turned himself into an exemplar of the eastern upper-class liberal establishment." He was flamboyant in making himself a cause celeb with his friends in the Liberal-aligned media.* The perjury charges that sent Hiss to jail were originated by none other than freshman Congressman Richard Nixon. The case brought Nixon to national attention. President Eisenhower chose him as VP, propelling him into the presidential elections of 1960 and 1968. The Hiss Case also goes far in explaining why the Liberal Press detested Nixon. They never forgave Nixon for originating the perjury charges against their friend. Nixon's never-ending war with the Liberal Press would later lead directly to the Watergate scandal.* The drama of the case drew national attention. It began when Hiss was subpoenaed by Nixon's House Un-American Activities Committee, which Democrats regarded as a partisan vendetta bent on embarrassing President Truman by questioning the loyalties of his appointees.

This book is extremely important because it does not contain so much new material but is an excellent analysis of the case. Hiss was guilty of spying for the Soviets in the name of a false and horrible ideology, namely Communism, which was responsible for the killing of tens of millions of people in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. Ms. Shelton argues that Communism and Fascism were both sides of the same coin. She discusses in detail the two perjury trials of Hiss, his conviction and release and the battle Hiss conducted in order to vindicate himself, unsuccessfully. Hiss was a traitor who divulged a lot of secrets to the Stalin criminal regime, including some data on the American A-bomb. Hiss became a secret agent of the adversary, because he was blinded by a false ideology, thus he chose to work for the GRU. As Ms. Shelton makes it clear, the case is far from being closed. The fact is that after the collapse of the Cold War, KGB archives containing relevant material on the case were opened, but GRU documents are still closed for inspection. This fact in itself limits the angle of the whole affair, in spite of the fact that so much is known. Hiss was not alone; there were hundreds of Americans in the thirties and forties of the previous century who were spying for Stalin. The FBI secret service was impotent and could not discover them. Had it not been for Gouzenko and Bentley, there is doubt whether the extent of the Russian espionage throughout the USA would have been discovered. The original part of the book contains evidence which was discovered quite by chance in Hungarian archives, linking Noel Field to Hiss. Field was recruited by Hiss to work for the Russians.

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