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Alger Hiss, who was convicted in 1950 of espionage-related perjury, is now 77 years old. He lied to a jury about whether or not he had worked as a Soviet agent, turning over to Moscow secret U.S. documents. If the statute of limitations had not run out, Hiss would have been convicted of treason — not espionage.

There is little doubt of his guilt, and of the fairness of his trial — although Hiss himself still maintains his innocence. In his latest petition for a new trial, in July 1982, Federal Judge Richard Owen turned him down, stating: "The trial was a fair one by any standard... The jury verdict rendered in 1950 was amply supported by the evidence — the most damaging aspects of which were admitted by Hiss — and nothing presented in these papers... places the verdict under any cloud."

Yet, despite Hiss' guilt, he remains a hero to some on the left who have, despite all of the evidence, supported his self-serving claims of innocence. Now, Hiss is touring the country, speaking at universities, receiving impressive lecture fees, and doing his best to defend both himself and the Soviet Union.

When he appeared in February, 1982 at the University of Colorado, Hiss was referred to in *The Colorado Daily* as "one of the first victims of the anti-communist hysteria that swept the country after World War II." What did he tell his audience? According to reporter S.K. Levin, "Red-baiting, McCarthyism merely served the interests of the Cold War," Hiss said, "...the strategy was to discredit Roosevelt and the New Deal."

The local newspaper, *The Daily Camera*, carried an editorial entitled "McCarthyism Is Only Dormant." It stated: "Joe McCarthy and his ilk were willing to leave a battlefield strewn with the bodies of accused communists in order to lay claim to political popularity. To get what they wanted they had to count on a gullible public with a lynch-mob mentality. One victim... was

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Alger Hiss: on making treason respectable

Alger Hiss... who was persecuted by the House Un-American Activities Committee and a young Richard Nixon...."

One wonders whether American History is still being taught at the University of Colorado — and the other schools where Alger Hiss is being invited to speak?

"Despite overwhelming evidence of his guilt, Hiss remains a hero."

Professor Allen Weinstein, the historian whose lawsuit caused the release of 15,376 pages of FBI files in the Hiss case, concludes that Hiss "has been lying about his relations" with his accuser, Whittaker Chambers, for nearly 30 years.

Citing defense records, Weinstein, who first thought that he would prove Hiss' innocence by gaining access to this material, says that people "who once believed in Alger Hiss may now be persuaded that he stole the documents in question" from the State Department as alleged by Chambers, who said they were both involved in Soviet espionage in 1938.

Newly released interviews with other participants in the spy ring confirm that Chambers had told the truth. Dr. Weinstein notes that Igor Gouzenko, the Soviet code clerk who had defected in Canada, revealed that the Soviets had an agent who was an assistant to Secretary of State Stertinius and that Elizabeth Bentley, another Soviet spy, had identified Hiss as a member of the communist underground.

Mr. Chambers asserted that Hiss had stolen secret documents for the Soviet Union while working as a New Deal official. Chambers produced over 65 pages of typed summaries and four handwritten transcriptions of State Department documents dating from December, 1937 to April, 1938. Mr. Hiss acknowledged that the handwriting was his.

In Dec. 1948 FBI technical experts compared the typed summaries with samples of Hiss' typed personal correspondence from the 1930s. They concluded that all but one of the documents had been typed on the same machine, a Woodstock, that Hiss later admitted having owned. Hiss, however, made this admission after having told the grand jury on three separate occasions that he had no knowledge of what happened to the typewriter.

Dr. Weinstein, in his book, *Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case* (Knopf, 1978), sets forth his findings in detail. After having met with Hiss and his friends, and examining 30,000 pages of material which he received from the FBI, Weinstein came to the conclusion that Hiss was clearly guilty.

Yet, despite overwhelming evidence of his guilt, Hiss remains a hero to many who seem completely innocent of any knowledge of history. Professor Edward J. Rozek of the University of Colorado, commenting upon Hiss' appearance there and the positive response to him of many in the community, noted that, "The fact that Hiss is going around various campuses and received a \$4,500 honorarium from the University of Colorado plus travel and expenses does not mean that he is innocent. It only means that those on the far left have no problem being invited to the universities and that the present generation of students does not know what was happening at the time Alger Hiss was doing his thing."

The American society, it seems, is in danger of losing an awareness of its history — even the history of its recent past. For a man such as Alger Hiss to become a respectable — much less heroic — figure on our campuses, the very places where a knowledge of the past should be carefully nurtured, tells us a great deal about the degraded state of our public life.