

soon learned, as Whittaker Chambers did in the 1930s, that he was the easiest mark in the world. When a beggar would approach with a hand out, Alger would not just pull a fistful of change from his pocket, he'd invariably ask, 'Is that enough?' Would he have tossed in his old Ford when he sublet his apartment to Chambers in 1935? You bet."³⁸ Kisseloff's impressions of Hiss as an "easy mark" run somewhat counter to the image of Hiss as a man who, according to his trial testimony, ended his relationship with Chambers when he realized that the loans were never going to be repaid. But perhaps Hiss found it easier to be generous to anonymous beggars than to people he actually knew. Chambers, of course, says Hiss helped him out because they were both Communists—and that communism was at the heart of their friendship.

Hiss, although he had a first-rate education and a first-rate legal mind, was not—at least not in the thirties—an intellectual with the wide-ranging interests of Chambers's old friends at Columbia. "Compared to the minds I had grown up with at Columbia," Chambers recalled, "free ranging, witty and deeply informed (one only has to think of Clifton Fadiman or Meyer Schapiro), Alger was a little on the stuffy side. Ideas for their own sake did not interest him at all. His mind had come to rest in the doctrines of Marx and Lenin, and even then applied itself