

ing care of the white protagonist, blacks are now in roles of authority, the captain or head of the FBI, but still exist to prop up the white character, who is usually more central to the plot. Films like *Deep Impact* and the *Star Wars* franchise, as well as TV shows like *Star Trek*, *Dollhouse*, and *Firefly*, feature substantial black characters who are in a position of power but largely function as a helpmate to their white counterparts.

This is why Sayles' *The Brother From Another Planet*, in which Morton plays a dark-skinned alien who crash-lands in Harlem, was so groundbreaking. "What John had in mind was to realize there were all these black people in New York, in the world, who had these tremendous amounts of talents and no place to exploit them," Morton says. "Here we have a guy who can cure things by touch but has no place in the world to go."

The key to how minority characters are presented is in the hands of the writers. And all the most celebrated filmmakers, from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s Joss Whedon and the new *Star Trek* film director J.J. Abrams to oldsters like George Lucas and *Star Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry, are white men. Most of the second- and third-tier screenwriters are, too.

James, the author and film critic, says these writers are delusional about our inevitable, multiracial future. "There's a state of denial about their own extinction," he jokes. "They're gone. Past history!" The reality is if humans are still around in another 3,000 years, there are only going to be more brown people. Shouldn't there be a Jamaican fleet captain? A Samoan first officer? A Chinese-Aborigine scientist? These writers have chosen to portray a nearly all-white world. What do they think happened to the billions upon billions of Earth's brown people?

Perhaps they are all there in this future but, just as in the past, you can't see them. Like the black elevator operator of yesterday or your Ecuadorian maid, they are there but not in the foreground. Still answering the phone in space. If you went to the bowels of the *Battlestar*, would you find a kitchen filled with young black and Latino men? If you searched for those bathrooms on the *Enterprise* would you

find a black woman scrubbing the floor?

In 1992, author Derrick Bell wrote the terrifying book *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*, in which he argues that "racism is an integral, permanent, and indestructible component of this society"—even in the future. In his short story, "The Space Traders," filmed by brothers Warrington and Reginald Hudlin for their short-lived HBO series *Cosmic Slop* in 1994, Bell tells of an alien race that offers riches to a cash-strapped, polluted America if it will just fork over all its black people. For what purpose, no one knows. But it's only a matter of time before all black people are rounded up to be shipped off to space. Blacks plead their case, but whites, blinded by wealth and power, conclude that offering up an entire race is simply the most logical thing to do.

*Cosmic Slop*, which was meant to be a minority-filled, *Twilight Zone*-style show, only aired one episode and was pronounced a failure. The show did not usher in a belle époque of black sci-fi. Black characters were soon back to answering the phone and playing caretaker roles.

"If science fiction is supposed to be a metaphor for something much greater than the world we live in, what we have now is what it will be unless we tell the story," Morton says. "On some level, we've kind of done it to ourselves. If we want to change what those images are, we have to do something to make those changes come to fruition." TAP

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## BOOKS

### I.F. STONE, JOURNALIST—AND SPY?

**AMERICAN RADICAL: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF I.F. STONE**  
BY D.D. GUTTENPLAN, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 570 pages, \$35.00

**SPIES: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE KGB IN AMERICA**  
BY JOHN EARL HAYNES, HARVEY KLEHR, AND ALEXANDER VASSILIEV  
Yale University Press, 650 pages, \$35.00

BY TODD GITLIN

**B**ETWEEN 1953 AND 1971, I.F. STONE wrote and published a *Weekly* (eventually a *Bi-Weekly*) combining pungent, timely tidbits unearthed from government documents with debunkings and jeremiads on civil rights, civil liberties, and the dangers of American arrogance and nuclear war. Blessed with terrible hearing, Stone had more than one reason to avoid the press conferences that dominate what the mainstream call "coverage." Instead, he pored over foreign-language papers and congressional hearing transcripts. To this reviewer, who first encountered the *Weekly* as a 17-year-old recruit to the New Left convinced that America was deeply culpable in the Cold War, nuclear testing, Cuba, and Vietnam, the *Weekly* was indispensable not just for bullshit detection and moral intelligence but for logic, homework, and pungent

prose. In 1965, Stone's demolition job of the State Department's white paper justifying U.S. intervention in Vietnam was an important piece of ammunition for the budding anti-war movement.

The *Weekly*, its circulation in the low five figures, its prose "acerbic, demotic, streetwise but not cynical"—in the words of Stone's latest biographer, D.D. Guttenplan—was the work of a college dropout who reveled in reporting and was essentially an autodidact. (I once heard him criticize Henry Wallace for bragging that he'd never read Marx: "What kind of ignoramus brags that he hasn't read Marx?") Stone's taste in summer reading ran to Spinoza. He had written prolifically for virtually every left-liberal daily and weekly in America before he started his own. Covering labor racketeering and war profiteering, he'd been "the New Deal's

favorite radical." In 1937, at the behest of his friend, New Deal-fixer Tommy Corcoran, he published a muckraking book attacking the Supreme Court as undemocratic. ("The Court can scent communism several centuries downwind, in a federal income tax or a minimum wage for chambermaids.") In 1947, he immersed himself in the Zionists' struggle against the British in Palestine.

Guttenplan's scrupulous, spirited biography is plainly a labor of love. Rightly, Guttenplan views Stone as a radical who happened to be a journalist and who thought that the mission of journalism was to nudge the arc of the universe a bit further in the direction of justice. Like many of his generation, Stone was at various times a Socialist, a fellow traveler, a radical, and a liberal. The latter two did not contradict themselves in his case. At the 1965 Washington demonstration against the Vietnam War, a demonstration that he did much to inspire, he followed to the platform the folksinger Phil Ochs, who had sung a sardonic song called "Love Me, I'm a Liberal." Chewing out Ochs, Stone declared that he himself was a liberal and had "seen snout-nosed Marxist-Leninists come and go."

Guttenplan has wisely chosen to write a life-and-times rather than hazard an inner life of this eminently public and discreet man. Stone's mother, Guttenplan discovers, suffered a nervous breakdown during the Depression, but Stone never spoke or wrote about it, and Guttenplan doesn't speculate about how it might have affected the journalist. Did it sensitize him, perhaps, to the abuse of the Soviet psychiatric prisons that he exposed to great effect in 1972 in *The New York Review of Books*?

Stone disenthralled himself from the USSR by fits and starts over the decades; the process was complete by the 1960s. But early in his career, he truly was, as they say, soft on the Soviet Union. Does that mean that he was a Soviet spy?

Cocky from having nailed Alger Hiss—a nailing long overdue on the left—right-wing treason-hunters have in recent years asserted chortling privileges over Stone. One round of accusations followed the 2006 publication of Myra MacPherson's biography of Stone, wherein the former

KGB general Oleg Kalugin was quoted as having claimed that in the 1960s, when Kalugin was undercover as a Soviet press attaché in Washington, Stone was "willing to perform tasks" for the Soviets—"tasks" being a charged but vague term on which Kalugin did not elaborate. He told MacPherson that Stone was "a fellow traveler who began his cooperation with the Soviet intelligence long before me," though on that score he offered no evidence. As MacPherson, Guttenplan, and Eric Alterman pointed out at the time, Kalugin was inconsistent and self-dramatizing, trying to flog his own memoir. Kalugin himself told Guttenplan in 1992, "I did not recruit [Stone] and I did not pay him money," adding that he "just met [Stone] in line with my official duties" as a Soviet press officer.

The latest accusation postdates Guttenplan's book and would seem, on its face, more plausible, for it refers to a period when Stone was actually, as he frequently acknowledged in later years,

***I.F. Stone was at various times a Socialist, a fellow traveler, a radical, and a liberal. The latter two did not contradict themselves in his case.***

a fellow traveler. In their luridly named new book, *Spies*, the historians John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr join the former KGB agent Alexander Vassiliev in charging that Stone was guilty of "cooperation with the KGB [then operating under a different name]" during the period 1936-1939. What is their evidence?

In 1994, Vassiliev was able to transcribe, quote, extract, and summarize a trove of KGB documents, compiling, in all, more than 1,100 pages of notes before heading into exile in 1996. His basis for selection is not clear, although he does say that he "made summaries of documents I didn't find ... vivid." Among these pages appear a few references to Stone. From these, Haynes and Klehr conclude that Stone "was a fully active agent," and that during "the next few years ... Stone worked closely with the KGB." Three mentions of him appear in a photo copy of one page. Another dates from 1939,

when Vassiliev's notes "list [Stone] as one of the New York station's agents in late 1938." Haynes and Klehr quote a few others, from 1944 and 1945.

The first, dated April 13, 1936, notes straight out that "Blin" ("Pancake") "is code name for Isidor Feinstein, commentator New York Post" (Feinstein was Stone's original name, which he had not yet changed). The second, dated May 20, 1936, says that "relations with Blin have entered 'the channel of normal operational work.' He went to Washington on assignment for his newspaper. Connections with State Dep., Congress. Knows 'Prince.'" ("Prince" is evidently a code name for Laurence Duggan, a high State Department official with Latin America responsibilities whom Haynes and Klehr believe to have been working for the KGB between 1937 and 1944, supplying it with documents during some of that time. After being questioned by the FBI in 1948, Duggan committed suicide.) The third, also dated May 20, 1936, records that

"Pancake" told Soviet intelligence that a correspondent for a Hearst-owned news agency had revealed to him that William Randolph Hearst was working with Hitler, that the Germans were buying information from his agency, and that Hearst had arranged with "German industry" to deliver a large amount of copper. The fourth records that the Soviets told "Pancake" to tell William A. Dodd Jr., the son of the U.S. ambassador to Germany, that "Pancake" could put him in touch with an anti-fascist group in Berlin; that "Pancake" ... briefly functioned as [Dodd Jr.'s] intermediary with the KGB, providing him with a contact in Berlin when he went to join his father at the embassy"; and that, in addition, "Pancake" "passed on to the KGB Dodd's information, picked up from the American military attaché, about possible German military moves against the USSR and the name of a suspected pro-Nazi embassy employee."



**Izzy? Was He?** Haynes and Klehr accuse Stone of being a Soviet agent in the years before the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact, but the evidence is inconclusive.

worked for the KGB. Haynes and Klehr conclude that for 1944–1945, then, there is “no firm evidence that Stone ... agreed to cooperate with the KGB.” Haynes and Klehr offer no evidence that the Soviets ever paid Stone. They also note that the mere assignment of a cover name is no proof that anyone was a KGB agent, since “many individuals” who were not spies (FDR and Winston Churchill among them) were assigned code names for the convenience of cipher officers.

What was Stone thinking during the nightmare years of 1936–1939? He was what would later be called, mordantly, a “premature anti-Fascist,” which meant also, at times, a trimmer. Guttenplan writes: “The threat of fascism scared Isidor Feinstein the way nothing ever would before or after. It scared him out of the Socialist Party; it scared him into the Popular Front.” Hitler was riding high. Fear of fascism was not outlandish; it was reasonable. Nor was it outlandish or vile, *during those years*, to believe that the fate of the world hinged on whether the USSR, Britain, and the U.S. would cooperate against Hitler and his allies. Not a few liberals were willing to overlook Stalin’s crimes in the show trials and in Spain, or to demote them from crimes to peccadilloes, or to pretend or rationalize them away. On this score, many who should have known better didn’t—partly because they didn’t want to know.

Guttenplan addresses the appearance of “Blin” in FBI decrypts from 1944, when a new KGB agent tried to recruit (or re-recruit) Stone and was rebuffed. But he didn’t know about Stone’s appearances in KGB files of the previous decades. So what can we say about those? Assume that the KGB archives are accurate as far as they go and that Vassiliev understood, quoted, and summarized them accurately. (In the current state of U.S.–Russian relations, it’s unlikely that anyone else will be able to rummage through the relevant files soon.)

Do the items about “Pancake” prove anything beyond that KGB agents in New York were eager to claim prowess in the eyes of Moscow? Could they have been inflating their success, as more than one Soviet might have thought wise to do with Stalin as a boss? What did they mean by “normal operational work”? Could Stone have been exchanging gossip and politically useful tips with fellow anti-fascists? Even granting the particulars noted by Vassiliev, Stone exercised bad judgment in dealing with Soviet agents, or people he ought to have known were Soviet agents, but still, how bad would it have been to think that Stalin’s government ought to know about Hearst’s collusion with the Nazis, or about “possible German military moves against the USSR,” or the name of a possible Nazi spy in the American embassy? What exactly would have been wrong with “putting [William A. Dodd Jr.] in touch with an anti-Fascist organization in Berlin”? A few years later, U.S. officials were supplying many more favors—including intelligence—to their Soviet allies in the great war against fascism. I see plenty of evidence of Stone’s intellectual slovenliness during those years but none that Stone did any harm to the United States.

Haynes and Klehr compile strong cases that scores of Americans committed espionage for the KGB in the 1930s and 1940s. Their “Case Closed” chapter on Alger Hiss, for one, lives up to its billing. But their detective work would be far more valuable if they resisted the temptation to extrapolate and gloat, and their case against Stone amounts to misplaced, overreaching prosecution. There’s no harm in being reminded how intellectuals and journalists—even the most admirable—once surrendered to siren songs, but it would be a crying shame if a retrospective espionage hysteria were to drown out respect for the extraordinary achievement of I.F. Stone. **TAP**

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Subsequent mentions of “Pancake” in the Soviet archive, from 1944 and 1945, “do not indicate that Stone was an active KGB agent or even in direct contact with it after 1938,” Haynes and Klehr write, “and given Stone’s initial anger against the Nazi-Soviet pact, it is likely that he broke relations with the KGB in late 1939.” At this point, Stone was indeed nearing the end of what Guttenplan calls his “brief career as an apologist for the Soviet Union.” Enraged and likely embarrassed by the August 1939 pact, Stone wrote to a friend soon afterward that there would be “no more fellow traveling” for him.

Haynes and Klehr allege, following Vassiliev’s notes, that Stone “worked closely” with the KGB in 1936–1938, collecting information, transmitting it to other agents, and talent-spotting; that the KGB thought about trying to recruit (or re-recruit) him in 1944 and even offered him money (Stone didn’t bite); and that later, when Harry S. Truman became president, Moscow’s KGB Center asked its New York spymaster to see what his agents could learn about Truman from four journalists. One of them was “Pancake.” Another, however, was Walter Lippmann, a k a “Bumblebee,” who no one alleges ever