

## I. F. Stone

### Encounters with Soviet Intelligence

❖ Max Holland

Of all the disclosures contained in the notebooks of Alexander Vassiliev, few are likely to be more contentious than those involving the journalist I. F. Stone.

From April 1936 until at least the fall of 1938, according to the notebooks, Stone acted as a “talent spotter,” helping to identify or recruit other Americans who might be receptive to assisting Soviet intelligence.<sup>1</sup> Under the assigned codename of “Blin,” Stone also acted as a courier, conveying messages between a Soviet intelligence officer and his American agent. These were intelligence functions, having nothing to do with being an editorial writer for the *New York Post*, Stone’s main occupation at the time. Vassiliev’s notes also reveal that Stone passed along privileged information that might be deemed useful for intelligence purposes. Altogether, these activities either contravene or, as this essay will argue, greatly complicate widely held views about Stone and his status as an icon of journalism.

When Stone died in June 1989 at the age of 81, all three major television networks announced his death on their news shows as if he were a household name rather than a print journalist whose work had appeared primarily in elite publications normally associated with the country’s intelligentsia. Stone was hailed as the living embodiment of the first amendment, a fiercely independent journalist opposed to the “Washington Insiderism” that often blights reporting from the nation’s capital.<sup>2</sup> Both *The Washington Post*, Stone’s local paper, and *The New York Times* ran full obituaries, editorials of praise, and appreciations in several op-ed pieces. As if to complement David Levine’s famed

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1. The Soviet Committee on State Security (KGB) was formed in 1954 from the former Ministry of State Security. Prior to that, the Soviet foreign intelligence service had undergone several changes of name. For the sake of simplicity, I will refer to it throughout this article as the KGB.

2. Charles Trueheart, “I. F. Stone’s View from the Outside,” *The Washington Post*, 4 January 1989, p. D16.

*New York Review of Books* caricature from 1968, which had depicted Stone tilting the Capitol dome to reveal the muck underneath, the political cartoonist Pat Oliphant drew a tribute that portrayed Stone, a reporter's notepad tucked under his arm and pencil in hand, standing before St. Peter at the gate to heaven. "He says he doesn't *want* to come in," St. Peter tells an unseen Deity over the telephone. "He'd rather hang around out here, and keep things honest."

Since then, two lengthy biographies of Stone have been published, and a third is imminent.<sup>3</sup> Nor have the encomia ceased. In March 2008, nearly twenty years after his death, the Nieman Foundation established the "I. F. Stone Medal," an annual award in recognition of the "spirit of independence, integrity and courage that characterized *I. F. Stone's Weekly*," a newsletter that Stone wrote, edited, and self-published from 1953 to 1971.<sup>4</sup>

The homage paid to "Izzy" Stone has not been without some controversy. Three years after his death in 1989, allegations were made about his relationship to a Soviet Committee on State Security (KGB) officer, Oleg Kalugin, who operated out of the Soviet embassy in Washington during the tumultuous mid-1960s. Subsequently, the release of Venona intercepts by the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) in 1995–1996 again raised the question of a relationship between Stone and the KGB, but this time from some twenty years earlier, in the midst of Washington's wartime alliance with Moscow.

The implications from both sets of allegations—indeed, the allegations themselves—were hotly disputed at the time, never truly resolved, and, in the end, generally dismissed or discounted as unimportant. Writing in *The American Prospect* online, Eric Alterman claimed that the entire matter was an "almost entirely bogus controversy over whether Stone ever willingly spied for the Russians or cooperated with the KGB in any way. He did not."<sup>5</sup> Now, however, Vassiliev's handwritten notes from documents in KGB archives provide new grist and show that at one point, at least, Stone did have a meaningful relationship. What was the nature of the link over time? Did it have a bearing on Stone's journalism?

This essay attempts to answer the first question by retracing the history of

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3. Robert C. Cottrell, *Izzy: A Biography of I. F. Stone* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993); Myra MacPherson, *All Governments Lie: The Life and Times of Rebel Journalist I. F. Stone* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2006); and D. D. Guttenplan, *American Radical: The Life and Times of I. F. Stone* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2009). In addition, the year before Stone's death, a series of 1984 interviews were fashioned into a short oral history of his life. See Andrew Patner, *I. F. Stone: A Portrait* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

4. "The First Annual I. F. Stone Medal for Journalistic Independence" (brochure), 7 October 2008 (Cambridge, MA: Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University).

5. Eric Alterman, "Stone Cold Untruths," *The American Prospect*, 3 October 2006, [http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article?stone\\_cold\\_untruths](http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article?stone_cold_untruths).

the allegations leveled about Stone: first via Kalugin, then Venona, and lastly Vassiliev. The article assesses the provenance and credibility of the allegations both as discrete claims and when taken together as a whole. The balance of the essay addresses the second question by juxtaposing the allegations with Stone's writings to discern the significance and meaning of the ostensible associations.

During the Cold War, enough reputations were unfairly damaged by indiscriminate charges, or by assertions based on secret evidence, that the truth of the allegations and the propriety of making them became conflated. The premise of this essay is that no matter how difficult it may be to escape an old box, the past ought not to act as a dead hand. Specific information, when it emerges from domestic or foreign archives, should be faced squarely and analyzed fairly. As I. F. Stone once observed in another context—after his first visit to the Soviet Union in 1956—he “was not wise enough, and perhaps no one else is either, to know how much truth may wisely be given the public.”<sup>6</sup>

## Kalugin's Tale(s)

The initial allegation concerned Stone's resumption of a relationship with the KGB during the mid-to-late 1960s—specifically, with a Soviet “press attaché” named Oleg Kalugin. The alleged renewal occurred when Stone was still writing, editing, and publishing *I. F. Stone's Weekly*, the “four-page miniature journal of news and opinion” for which he had become acclaimed.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, as he entered his sixties in the 1960s, Stone was enjoying an enviable professional renaissance, owing mainly to the rise of the so-called “New Left” in the United States and dissent over U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.<sup>8</sup>

Oleg Danilovich Kalugin had initially come to America in 1958 to attend the Columbia University School of Journalism, one of seventeen ostensible “students” from the Soviet Union to arrive under the Fulbright exchange program that year, and the first Soviet citizens to study in the United States since the end of World War II. In truth, half of them, including the 24-year-

6. I. F. Stone, “STALINISM IS FAR FROM LIQUIDATED,” *I. F. Stone's Weekly* (hereinafter referred to as *Weekly*), Vol. 4, No. 19, 28 May 1956, pp. 1–4. All issues of the *Weekly* from 17 January 1953 to 1 December 1971 are online at <http://www.ifstone.org/>.

7. Karl Weber, ed., *The Best of I. F. Stone* (New York: Public Affairs Books, 2006), p. xiv.

8. A. Kent MacDougall, “I. F. Stone Achieves Success, Respectability But Keeps Raking Muck,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 14 July 1970, pp. 1, 22.

old Kalugin, were actually representing Soviet intelligence services. He was already a lieutenant in the KGB, having begun his training in 1952.<sup>9</sup>

Kalugin's real mission was to establish a foundation for his next assignment as a case officer. He was supposed to improve his already proficient English, make as many friends and contacts as he could, and gain first-hand exposure to the manners and mores of Americans. He did exceedingly well. A May 1959 article in *The New York Times* about the exchange program's first year featured a long sidebar about the engaging, jazz-loving Soviet "student" who had been elected to the School of Journalism's student council. "Brilliant" and "a real personality kid" were among the terms Kalugin's professors and fellow students used to describe him.<sup>10</sup>

Kalugin's first fully operational posting abroad was in New York from June 1960 to March 1964. Journalism was a convenient cover for many KGB officers, and in Kalugin's case he posed as Radio Moscow's United Nations (UN) correspondent. He would interview such notables as then Senator Albert Gore, Sr. when Gore was designated a member of the U.S. delegation to the UN General Assembly.<sup>11</sup> Kalugin's real job, though, operating out of the *rezidentura* at Moscow's UN mission, was political intelligence, or "Line PR" in KGB parlance. A Line PR officer cultivated Americans or foreigners who could supply the KGB with "classified or unclassified information about American foreign and domestic policy," as Kalugin put it in his 1994 memoir.<sup>12</sup> Sources of information ran the gamut from overt or legal contacts, who were probably unwitting that they were exchanging information with a KGB officer, to confidential contacts, who may or may not have been aware of Kalugin's true role yet were nonetheless willing to be cooperative within limits.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to contacts, Kalugin also cultivated agents, of which more

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9. Oleg Kalugin with Fen Montaigne, *The First Directorate: My 32 Years in Intelligence and Espionage against the West* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), pp. 25–26.

10. "A Popular Russian," *The New York Times*, 11 May 1959, p. 7.

11. "Gore Hails Space Pact in Talk on Soviet Radio," *The New York Times*, 15 December 1962, p. 8.

12. Kalugin, *First Directorate*, p. 35.

13. The KGB term for a person who was a source of intelligence information, broadly interpreted, was *istochnik razvedyvatel'noy informatsii*, literally meaning "source of intelligence information" but construed more loosely as "agent, confidential contact, or legal contact from whom intelligence information is obtained." The term of art for those who were less than an agent but more than a source was *doveritel'nyye svyazi* (confidential contacts); it was reserved for "individuals who, without being agents, communicate to intelligence officers information of interest to them and carry out confidential requests, which in substance are of an intelligence nature, on the basis of ideological and political affinity, material interest, friendly or other relations." Confidential contacts, unlike agents, were not regarded as having any obligations toward their case officer or the KGB. See Vasilii Mitrokhin, ed., *KGB Lexicon: The Soviet Intelligence Officer's Handbook* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), pp. 34, 48.

than a dozen varieties existed. Agents were distinguished by their willingness to carry out assigned tasks, although they were certainly allowed, even encouraged, to function simultaneously as sources of information. The recruitment of agents enabled Kalugin to carry out one of the most sensitive facets of Line PR: so-called active measures. These encompassed a wide array of overt and covert psychological measures, among them, the recruitment of agents of influence for “operations aim[ed] at pollution of the opinion-making process in the West.”<sup>14</sup> During his first posting in New York, Kalugin became deeply involved in this specialty because of the city’s role as a nexus for publishing, writing, and setting the country’s intellectual agenda.

One barely disguised agent of influence during Kalugin’s tour in New York was Carl Marzani, who ran a publishing company and book club, both of which the KGB subsidized directly.<sup>15</sup> But the “agent of influence” rubric encompassed many gradations. A more nuanced relationship that Kalugin nurtured was with M. S. Arnoni, editor and publisher of a monthly periodical titled *The Minority of One*, which was something of a New York-based rival (if only in Arnoni’s mind) to *I. F. Stone’s Weekly*.<sup>16</sup> Before Kalugin came along, Arnoni, on his own initiative, was publishing articles critical of U.S. policy and consonant with the Soviet theme of “peaceful coexistence.” After Kalugin persuaded the “Center” (the Soviet foreign intelligence headquarters in Moscow) that Arnoni’s publication could be used on behalf of Soviet interests, a relationship developed that eventually saw Arnoni unwittingly publish pro-Soviet articles that had been prepared, in fact, by the KGB’s propaganda unit in Moscow. In addition, Arnoni, who was always hard-pressed for money, became a recipient of funds from anonymous Soviet “sponsors” who were, in fact, the KGB.<sup>17</sup>

14. Lothar Metz, “Reflections on the Soviet Secret Police and Intelligence Services,” *Orbis*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Fall 1974), p. 921. The term of art for a Soviet agent of influence was *agent vliyaniya* (agent of influence), meaning an “agent operating under intelligence instructions who uses his official or public position, and other means, to exert influence on policy, public opinion, the course of particular events, the activity of political organizations and state agencies in target countries.” Mitrokhin, ed., *KGB Lexicon*, p. 3.

15. In his 1994 memoir, Kalugin wrote that “Marzani had close ties to the Soviet government and the KGB, which secretly gave him money to keep his publishing house afloat.” Five years later, Vasili Mitrokhin’s notes from KGB archives independently corroborated Kalugin’s account. Kalugin, *First Directorate*, p. 45; and Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), pp. 226–227.

16. Founded in 1959, *The Minority of One* was billed as an “Independent Monthly for an American Alternative—Dedicated to the Eradication of All Restrictions on Thought.” A typical issue might run up to 40 pages and feature original or reprinted articles written by left-wing authors other than Arnoni—including, in the mid-1960s, Victor Perlo. Aside from propagating conspiracy theories about the John F. Kennedy assassination, Arnoni’s publication was notable for inveighing against the nuclear arms race. It ceased publication in 1968.

17. Kalugin, *First Directorate*, p. 54.

Kalugin's next posting in the United States was in Washington, where he became chief deputy for Line PR in 1965. This important position, along with Kalugin's new rank of major, was indicative of a swift rise through KGB ranks. He also had a new cover as press attaché for the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which gave him diplomatic passport and thus immunity from arrest.

Operating out of the top floor of the Soviet embassy on 16th Street, Kalugin oversaw the work of about twenty KGB officers, whose own covers ran the gamut from diplomat to doorman. Kalugin himself was also expected to collect information about U.S. politics and government policies, and it was in this capacity that he eventually sought contact with I. F. Stone—not to mention a score of other U.S. journalists, all of whom were more mainstream. Among the other journalists reportedly contacted were syndicated columnists Walter Lippmann, Joseph Kraft, and Drew Pearson; reporters Chalmers M. Roberts, Murrey Marder, and Stephen S. Rosenfeld of *The Washington Post*; Joseph C. Harsch of *The Christian Science Monitor*; Richard Valeriani of NBC News; and Henry Brandon, the Washington correspondent for *The Times* of London. These relationships were in keeping with Kalugin's cover role as press attaché and simultaneously served Line PR purposes in that they enabled Kalugin to gather political intelligence and Washington scuttlebutt rather effortlessly. At least one of the journalists he contacted, Stephen S. Rosenfeld, who subsequently became the *Post*'s Moscow correspondent, would later maintain that he "always knew Oleg was KGB because he was so intelligent. The smart ones [were] always KGB."<sup>18</sup>

In 1992, however, allegations surfaced that Kalugin's contact with one of these journalists, I. F. Stone, had crossed the line that separates a contact from an agent. The story trickled out in a roundabout way, beginning with a visit Kalugin paid to the United States in January 1992.

Kalugin had burst into public view in June 1990. After publishing a journal article about the need to reform the Soviet security services, he was abruptly forced to retire at age 55.<sup>19</sup> Once considered a sure bet to rise to the top of the KGB pyramid, Kalugin now emerged as a scathing critic of the security service's still pervasive and ubiquitous role in Soviet society, despite the agency's claims that it was mutating into a "normal" intelligence service under Mikhail Gorbachev. No one of such high rank had ever been as outspoken and unrelenting in his criticism of the KGB's repressive role as a "tool of the

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18. *Ibid.*, pp. 73–74; and David Remnick, "KGB Ex-General Assails Infiltration of Soviet Society," *The Washington Post*, 17 June 1990, p. A29.

19. David Remnick, "Gorbachev Disciplines KGB Aide," *The Washington Post*, 1 July 1990, p. A1.

Communist Party.”<sup>20</sup> Kalugin’s open breach with his former employer clearly stemmed, at least in part, from having his career path blocked by KGB hacks he had grown to detest. Yet, his critique also contained a powerful dose of truth, and his stunning charges were taken seriously in Moscow during that twilight period from the 1989 collapse of the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe to the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union and Communism itself. After being stripped of his major-general’s rank and pension for his heresy, Kalugin kept busy as a member of parliament, a role that conveniently provided him with immunity (the KGB wanted to press criminal charges against him for disclosing state secrets). He also served as a television personality and oracle for the Western press corps, owing in no small part to his excellent English.

On the morning of 19 August 1991, during the dramatic confrontation in front of the Russian parliament, Kalugin was within an arm’s length of the Soviet tank on which Boris Yeltsin stood and defied the Communist coup plotters. Afterward, Kalugin came to the United States on something of a triumphal barnstorming visit, his first as a non-KGB officer. With his adversaries in disgrace, he had also been restored to his former high rank, though he remained retired.<sup>21</sup> As the KGB’s one-time head of counterintelligence, few former officers seemingly had more to offer. Kalugin appeared around the clock on radio and television talk shows from New York to Los Angeles and made speeches around the country. Simultaneously, his representatives at the William Morris Agency negotiated with publishers about a planned memoir and talked to producers about TV or movie projects involving untold tales of Cold War espionage.<sup>22</sup>

During this whirlwind tour, at a private dinner in Washington, Kalugin first mentioned his relationship with I. F. Stone. Herbert Romerstein, a former staff member of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) and, later, the House Committee on Intelligence, had made a point of sitting next to Kalugin in hopes of learning some details about his postings in the United States. When Kalugin acknowledged he had worked in Line PR, Romerstein pressed him for information about American journalists who had been agents of influence. That subject was of keen interest to Romerstein, who had also served as head of the U.S. Information Agency’s Office to Counter Soviet Active Measures and Disinformation during the Reagan ad-

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20. David Remnick, “Critic of KGB Wins Election in Russia,” *The Washington Post*, 4 September 1990, p. A12.

21. In the wake of the failed coup d’état, President Gorbachev rescinded the 1990 order stripping Kalugin of his rank and awards. “KGB Dissident Back in Grace,” *The New York Times*, 2 September 1991, p. 7.

22. Elaine Sciolino, “KGB Telltale Is Tattling, But Is He Telling U.S. All?” *The New York Times*, 20 January 1992, p. A1.

ministration. Initially, Kalugin mentioned Carl Marzani and M. S. Arnoni. They were not mercenaries, Kalugin insisted, they merely accepted funds to get their work done—that is, books and articles that Moscow deemed useful to relations between the superpowers.

Subsequently, in what Romerstein took as an effort to impress him, Kalugin mentioned another American journalist who fell into this category, although he was much more distinguished and prominent than either Marzani or Arnoni. “I myself got him back,” Kalugin said, noting that the journalist had severed an earlier relationship with the KGB in 1956, the year Khrushchev denounced Stalin. Kalugin then explained how he had lost this same journalist in 1968, following the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. The last time they met, Kalugin recalled, the journalist allegedly said, “I’m not taking any more money from you bastards.”<sup>23</sup>

When Romerstein prodded Kalugin for the journalist’s name, the former KGB major general demurred; he said he was not in the business of naming names, though he had already identified Marzani and Arnoni. Finally, Kalugin relented on the condition that Romerstein agree to keep the journalist’s identity off the record, as well as everything that had already been said about him. The journalist was the late I. F. Stone, Kalugin confided to Romerstein, stressing that the money Stone received had not gone to him personally, but had subsidized the *Weekly*. Kalugin also made a point of saying that Stone would have written the same articles “whether he was paid or not.”<sup>24</sup>

About two months later, Kalugin gave a lecture at the University of Exeter in England. With the Soviet Communist Party routed but Russia still very much in flux, Kalugin was in great demand as a commentator on contemporary events. Andrew Brown, an experienced and widely published reporter, covered the appearance for *The Independent*, a British newspaper, and also interviewed Kalugin privately for about 50 minutes.<sup>25</sup> During his address, Kalugin spoke about the KGB’s efforts to penetrate the West and of the large number of foreign nationals who had voluntarily assisted Soviet intelligence after World War II, only to sever their ties in 1956. Once Khrushchev’s secret speech denouncing Stalinism leaked to the West, Kalugin observed, the KGB simply could not recruit people on ideological grounds; the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 was another terrific setback.

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23. Herbert Romerstein, telephone interview, 18 November 2008.

24. Herbert Romerstein and Eric Breindel, *The VENONA Secrets: Exposing Soviet Espionage and America’s Traitors* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2000), p. 563.

25. Andrew Brown, “The Attack on I. F. Stone,” *The New York Review of Books*, 8 October 1992, p. 21.



Kalugin was then quoted by Brown as saying, apropos of this double blow to KGB recruitment,

We had an agent—a well-known American journalist—with a good reputation, who severed his ties with us after 1956. I myself convinced him to resume them. But in 1968, after the invasion of Czechoslovakia . . . he said he would never again take any money from us.<sup>26</sup>

This was more or less the same story that Kalugin had privately told Romerstein.

About two months after Brown's article appeared, Romerstein contacted Kalugin during a trip to Moscow for research in former Soviet archives. Romerstein sorely wanted to write about Stone, and now that Kalugin had repeated the gist of the story in public, Romerstein pressed him to lift the earlier stipulation. Kalugin eventually agreed on the condition that Romerstein write the story in a disguised manner, not attributing the revelation directly to Kalugin. Consequently, when Romerstein wrote up the story for *Human Events*, an arch-conservative weekly periodical, he cited a "retired high-ranking KGB officer" as confirming that Kalugin had been talking about I. F. Stone at Exeter University. Of course, the former officer, who had "extensive knowledge about operations against the United States," was Kalugin himself.<sup>27</sup>

Romerstein's 6 June article sparked a firestorm of controversy that lasted the rest of the year and, indeed, still smolders. Stone's defenders did not take the position that he was *never* in contact with Kalugin, for the simple reason that Stone himself had openly admitted it years earlier, after several ostensible pages from his Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) file were leaked to Jack Anderson, the syndicated columnist.<sup>28</sup> But if the acquaintanceship was a mat-

26. Andrew Brown, "Ideological Errors That Mortally Wounded the KGB," *The Independent*, 12 March 1992, p. 6.

27. Romerstein, telephone interview, Clinton, MD, 18 November 2008; and Herbert Romerstein, "The KGB Penetration of the Media," *Human Events*, 6 June 1992, p. 5. In his 2009 memoir, Kalugin gave his version of how the first article by Romerstein came about: "Years later when I came back to America as sort of a celebrity, I had lunch with a supposed Washington journalist [Romerstein], and Stone's name popped up during our conversation. I said that at some point in my career I maintained friendly relations with Stone and used him as a source of information on various aspects of American policy. Soon an article appeared in one of Washington's magazines where Stone was mentioned as a Soviet KGB agent. The author of the article quoted me, alleging that I confirmed Stone's ties to the Soviet intelligence. I was not aware of this publication until I returned to the United States." See Oleg Kalugin, *Spymaster: My 32 Years in Intelligence and Espionage against the West* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), p. 79. According to Romerstein, however, Kalugin read the *Human Events* article within a month or so after it was published. See Herbert Romerstein, "The Evidence Is Not to Be Denied: I. F. Stone Worked for the KGB," *New York Post*, 30 July 1992, p. 14.

28. Anderson had written a short item in May 1972 criticizing the FBI's surveillance of the "undefatigable [*sic*] muckraker I. F. Stone." The "most suspicious notation" contained in the file, Anderson argued, stated that on "February 11, 1966, at 1:09 p.m., the subject [Stone] was observed to

ter of record, Stone's legion of friends and admirers, as well as what might be called the liberal intelligentsia, nonetheless denounced Romerstein's story as a transparent effort by a notorious former HUAC staffer to smear Stone's reputation, using McCarthy-like tactics and unidentified sources. An August 1992 editorial in *The New York Times* suggested that the allegations against Stone were "poppycock," "repugnant" and "gross." Romerstein was condemned for trying to revive the discredited hunt for "Red spies" from the fearful 1950s and relying on the anonymous word of a "shadowy" KGB officer who supposedly knew whom Kalugin had in mind.<sup>29</sup> An editorial in *The Washington Post*, meanwhile, labeled Romerstein's blanket charge that Stone was a "paid Soviet agent" a "completely undocumented and poisonous allegation."<sup>30</sup>

Some of the controversy played out in the pages of *The New York Review of Books*, for which Stone had begun writing in 1964, the year it was founded.<sup>31</sup> Other notable articles appeared in opinion-laden periodicals on an almost tit-for-tat basis, as the controversy became a surrogate battlefield for re-fighting the domestic war over the Cold War.<sup>32</sup> The debate featured both fair

meet Oleg D. Kalugin in front of Harvey's Restaurant" [on Connecticut Avenue]. Together, they subsequently entered [the restaurant]." See Jack Anderson, "FBI Checks on Citizens, But Not Drugs," *The Washington Post*, 1 May 1972, p. D15. Several years later, when author Curt Gentry was interviewing Stone for a biography of J. Edgar Hoover, the item in Jack Anderson's 1972 column came up. Stone told Gentry he had deliberately chosen this meeting place with Kalugin "to tweak Hoover's nose." Stone knew that Harvey's, located inside the Mayflower Hotel, was Hoover's favorite restaurant. See Curt Gentry, *J. Edgar Hoover: The Man and the Secrets* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), p. 719.

29. "Strange New Pals in the KGB," *The New York Times*, 13 August 1992, p. A22.

30. "Red-Baiting Still," *The Washington Post*, 15 August 1992, p. A18.

31. *The New York Review of Books* eventually became home to Stone's longer essays and then his primary outlet once he folded the *Weekly* in 1971 after failing to find a successor. See Christopher Lydon, "I. F. Stone to Suspend 19-Year-Old Leftist Biweekly," *The New York Times*, 7 December 1971, p. 43.

32. The major articles in order of publication: Brown, "Ideological Errors That Mortally Wounded the KGB"; "Every Secret Thing," *The Washington Times*, 5 June 1992, p. F2; Romerstein, "The KGB Penetration of the Media"; Reed Irvine, "I. F. Stone: The Icon Was KGB Agent," *Accuracy in Media (AIM) Report*, July-A 1992, pp. 1-2; "The Task of Assigning Blame," *The Washington Times*, 7 July 1992, p. F2; Ray Kerrison, "I. F. Stone: The Con Artist of Journalism," *New York Post*, 10 July 1992, p. 2; Romerstein, "The Evidence Is Not to Be Denied"; D. D. Guttenplan, "Izzy an Agent?" *The Nation*, 3/10 August 1992, pp. 124-125; Eric Breindel, "Unceasing I. F. Stone Dispute," *New York Post*, 9 August 1992, p. 3; "Strange New Pals in the KGB"; "Red-Baiting Still"; Herbert Romerstein, "I. F. Stone Was Indeed a KGB Agent," *Human Events*, 15 August 1992, p. 10; Herbert Romerstein, Letter to the Editor, *The New York Times*, 31 August 1992, p. A14; Reed Irvine, Letter to the Editor, *The New York Times*, 31 August 1992, p. A14; Mikhail P. Kazachkov, Letter to the Editor, *The New York Times*, 31 August 1992, p. A14; Herbert Romerstein, Letter to the Editor, *The Washington Post*, 6 September 1992, p. C6; "The Stone Affair, Deconstructed," *The New York Times*, 26 September 1992, p. 20; Herbert Romerstein, Letter to the Editor, *The Nation*, 28 September 1992, p. 310; D. D. Guttenplan, "Stone Unturned," *The Nation*, 28 September 1992, pp. 312-313; Andrew Brown, "The Attack on I. F. Stone," *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 39, No. 16 (8 October 1992), p. 21; Cassandra Tate, "Who's Out to Lunch Here?" *Columbia Journalism Review*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (November 1992), pp. 13-14; Reed Irvine, "Notes from the Editor's Cuff," *AIM Report*, November-B 1992, pp. 5-6; Eric Breindel, "Moscow Gold," *Commentary*, December 1992, p. 48; Herbert Romerstein, Martin Garbus, and Andrew Brown, "The Attack on I. F. Stone: An Exchange," *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 39, No. 20 (3 December 1992), available online at <http://www.nybooks.com/>

and disingenuous questions about the allegation and tendentious or exaggerated claims from both sides, but the story became particularly confusing because Kalugin promptly seemed to distance himself from what he had said earlier, both publicly and privately. All this occurred against the backdrop of a built-in presumption, probably unwarranted, that Kalugin would feel under some kind of obligation to Western journalists seeking to pin him down.

The former KGB major-general readily admitted that Stone was indeed the journalist he had in mind when he spoke at Exeter University and used the term of art “agent.” But when telephoned in Moscow by Stone biographer D. D. Guttenplan in June 1992, days after Romerstein’s first article was published, Kalugin also asserted: “I did not recruit [Stone], and I did not pay him money.”<sup>33</sup> When Andrew Brown reinterviewed Kalugin in September 1992, Kalugin told the British journalist that Romerstein’s characterization was “a malicious misinterpretation. . . . Never did I mention Stone as a man who was paid as a Soviet agent.”<sup>34</sup>

Such statements were offered up as rebuttals to Romerstein’s characterization. Upon a close reading, however, Kalugin’s parsed remarks left plenty of

articles/2734; Arnold Beichman, “Written in Stone on the Left Side,” *The Washington Times*, 8 December 1992, p. F4; Myra MacPherson, “The Secret War against I. F. Stone,” *The Washington Post*, 21 August 1994, pp. C1, C4; Reed Irvine, “I. F. Stone Outed,” *AIM Report*, August-B 1994, pp. 1–3; Reed Irvine, “Final Word on Hiss and I. F. Stone,” *AIM Report*, March-B 1996, pp. 1–2; Arch Puddington, “Red Menace—Really,” *National Review*, 8 April 1996, p. 48; Eric Alterman, “I Spy with One Little Eye . . .,” *The Nation*, 29 April 1996, p. 21; Eric Alterman, “Izzy: Wuz He?” *The Nation*, 13 May 1996, p. 7; Walter and Miriam Schneir, “Stone Miscast,” *The Nation*, 4 November 1996, pp. 6–7, 25; Reed Irvine, “Keeping Leftist Legends Alive,” *AIM Report*, April-B 1997, pp. 16–17; Eric Alterman, “Red-Baiting Stone,” *The Nation*, 20 July 1998, p. 7; “Red-Baited after All These Years” (Letter to the Editor), *The Nation*, 21 September 1998, p. 2; Philip Nobile, “I Lied’: Testing the Intellectual Honesty of Eric Alterman,” *New York Press*, 19 January 1999, p. 15; Jacob Weisberg, “Cold War without End,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 28 November 1999, p. SM116; Stephen Schwartz, “A Tale of Two VENONAs,” *The Nation*, 21 December 2000, p. 42; Victor Navasky, “I. F. Stone,” *The Nation*, 21/28 July 2003, pp. 19–20; MacPherson, *All Governments Lie*, pp. 307–328; Geoffrey Wheatcroft, “Tireless on the Left, The Great I. F. Stone,” *The New York Observer*, 11 September 2006, p. 20; Eric Alterman, “All Governments (and Some Journalists) Lie,” *The Nation*, Vol. 283, No. 4 (18 September 2006), p. 15; Paul Berman, “The Watchdog,” *The New York Times Book Review*, 1 October 2006, p. 12; Alterman, “Stone Cold Untruths”; Paul Berman, “Confound It,” *The American Prospect*, 4 October 2006, available on-line at [http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article:confound\\_it](http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article:confound_it); Myra MacPherson, “Sins of Omission,” *The American Prospect*, 13 October 2006, available on-line at [http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article:sins\\_of\\_omission](http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article:sins_of_omission); Myra MacPherson, Letter to the Editor, *The New York Times Book Review*, p. 6; D. D. Guttenplan, Letter to the Editor, *The New York Times Book Review*, 22 October 2006, p. 6; John Powers, “Not the President’s Men,” *The Nation*, Vol. 283, No. 13 (23 October 2006), pp. 31–36; Ronald Radosh, “Romancing I. F. Stone,” *The New Criterion*, November 2006, pp. 4–9; Judy Bachrach, “Traveling Fellow: If I. F. Stone Wasn’t a Spy, He Was the Next Best Thing,” *The Weekly Standard*, 13 November 2006, pp. 21–22; Nicholas Lemann, “The Weekly Warrior,” *The New Yorker*, 27 November 2006, 126–133; Dan Seligman, “Independent Variable,” *Commentary*, December 2006, pp. 59–62; “The False Charges against I. F. Stone Arise from Two Sources,” n.d., The Website of I. F. Stone, <http://www.ifstone.org/biography-refuted.php>; and Guttenplan, *American Radical*, pp. 270–275, 518.

33. Guttenplan, “Izzy an Agent?” pp. 124–125.

34. Brown, “The Attack on I. F. Stone,” p. 21.

wiggle room for competing interpretations. Kalugin was accurate in asserting that he had never “mention[ed] Stone as a man who was paid as a Soviet agent.” Yet that was not necessarily the flat retraction that some construed it to be. Beginning with his first private conversation with Romerstein, Kalugin had tried to take the edge off the disclosure by distinguishing between funds allegedly provided to support Stone’s work, as opposed to Stone personally. In terms of intelligence praxis, this was a distinction without a difference. Still, Kalugin could legitimately claim that he had never described Stone as a man who was paid as a Soviet agent; rather, it was a “malicious misinterpretation” fostered by Stone’s detractors.

Finally, even Kalugin’s seemingly contradictory statements about Stone’s alleged receipt of funds were not necessarily inconsistent. Romerstein had taken what Kalugin told him (that Stone received money) and made the exaggerated claim that Stone was “beholden to the KGB, which financed his newsletter . . . during many of the 19 years that he published it.”<sup>35</sup> Stone’s defenders then made it appear that Kalugin had repudiated this characterization when he said that he had not paid Stone any money and that he had only picked up the tab for their semi-monthly lunches. But in truth, Kalugin was backing away only from the inference that *he* was involved in subsidizing Stone when they were in contact during the mid-to-late 1960s. That still left unaddressed the issue of whether Stone had received funds during the earlier period of his alleged recruitment—that is, prior to 1956.

The story became even more muddled when Kalugin’s memoir was published in 1994. In this iteration, he fully retreated from the notion that Stone had been an agent and effectively turned him into a mere source, all but indistinguishable from the other American journalists Kalugin had cultivated during his Washington tour. The memoir read:

About a half-dozen times a year I would meet—usually at lunch—with the well-known leftist Washington journalist I. F. Stone. Before the revelations of Stalin’s terror and before the Soviet Union’s invasion of Hungary in 1956, Stone had been a “fellow traveler” who made no secret of his admiration for the Soviet system. After 1956, however, he had become a sharp critic of our government. Shortly after arriving in Washington, Moscow cabled me, saying we should reestablish contact with Stone. KGB headquarters never said he had been an agent of our intelligence service, but rather that he was a man with whom we had had regular contact.

. . . I came to view Stone as a sympathetic character, with insightful views. . . . Our relationship ended, however, following the Soviet invasion of Czechoslova-

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35. Elsewhere in the article it was alleged that Stone took “a considerable amount of KGB money for more than two decades.” See Romerstein, “The KGB Penetration of the Media,” p. 5.

kia. [Shortly after] Stone and I again met for lunch, but this time his manner was aloof. He warmed up somewhat as we ate and talked, but when I went to pick up the tab at the end of the meal . . . he angrily refused to let me pay.

"No, I will never take money from your bloody government," he said.

We split the bill and said goodbye. I never saw Stone again.<sup>36</sup>

Kalugin's conduct was disconcerting, indeed infuriating, to all parties interested in the matter, if only because he seemed incapable of telling the same story more than once. Every iteration was slightly amended from the previous version, which seemed to make the allegation problematic because it ultimately rested on Kalugin's word in the absence of any documentation. The sheer variety of explanations suggested that Kalugin had a strong penchant for tailoring his story according to what he believed his audience wanted to hear. Thus, he would tell Romerstein, a writer with strong anti-Communist leanings, that Stone had been an agent and received funds. When confronted by Stone's friends and allies, however, Kalugin would depict Stone as nothing more than a sympathetic contact in the mid-to-late 1960s whose lunch tab he was pleased to pick up.<sup>37</sup>

In addition, Kalugin's account(s) seemed a function of his location at a given time and, more importantly, the political environment in Moscow. Kalugin was attempting something unprecedented for a former KGB major-general. To be sure, a vast number of revealing books, articles, and testimonies by former officers, all of whom had defected during the Cold War, had appeared in earlier years. Moreover, after 1991 the Russian successor to the KGB permitted several projects on Soviet-era intelligence, many of which involved controlled access to KGB archives. But no one in Soviet society had ever dared walk the tightrope that Kalugin was attempting to negotiate. In effect, he was making disclosures of a kind normally associated with a defector, while insisting that he remained a loyal citizen of the state and intended to stay in Russia without divulging everything he knew—neither to the public nor to any rival intelligence service.<sup>38</sup> Of Kalugin, a former director of the U.S. Central Intel-

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36. Kalugin, *First Directorate*, p. 74. The same account appears almost verbatim in the revised edition of Kalugin's memoir, *Spymaster*, p. 79.

37. Eric Alterman noted Kalugin's chameleon-like approach in 1996, after meeting Kalugin at a Washington dinner party. Alterman said he asked Kalugin "point blank if Izzy knowingly cooperated with the KGB. He spent a few moments trying to determine which answer I wanted. When he realized Stone had been my close friend, he assured me that there was nothing to the reports." Alterman, "Izzy: Wuz He?" p. 7.

38. Tennent H. Bagley, "KGB Memories," *The Wall Street Journal*, 20 September 1994, p. A20. The hubbub over Kalugin's relationship with Stone, while intense, was actually the least of the disputes that raged around Kalugin in the 1990s. Early in the decade, he was at the center of the controversies over KGB involvement in the London murder of Bulgarian dissident Georgi Markov and alleged KGB interrogations of American POWs captured during the Vietnam War. Craig R. Whitney, "Ex-Official Links KGB to Killing," *The New York Times*, 13 June 1991, p. A18; and Barbara Crossette, "Vietnam

ligence Agency (CIA), Richard Helms, observed: “he’s not telling the whole truth, as no intelligence officer ever would in public. He doesn’t want to get totally on the outs with the people in his own country. If I were in his position I would do exactly the same thing.”<sup>39</sup>

Ultimately, Kalugin could not keep his equipoise, particularly after a former “Chekist,” Vladimir Putin, came to power in 2000. This time around it was not just a matter of being stripped of his former high rank. In 2002, Kalugin was put on trial in absentia for, among other things, divulging state secrets in his 1994 memoir.<sup>40</sup>

Kalugin’s treason conviction resulted in a 15-year sentence. Rather than serve it he became a U.S. citizen in August 2003. That formerly unthinkable change in status may have had something to do with Kalugin’s next iteration of his relationship with Stone, which occurred in 2006. Via an introduction by a “trusted mutual friend,” Kalugin spoke at length to Judy Bachrach, who was writing a book review/essay about Stone for *The Weekly Standard*. Myra MacPherson’s biography of Stone had just been published, along with a new “best of” compilation of Stone’s articles. As before, Kalugin’s latest account contained new wrinkles and variations.

According to the Bachrach iteration, a cable ordering Kalugin to recruit, if possible, the journalist I. F. Stone—“who used to be our source for many years”—arrived from Moscow in 1966, approximately six months after Kalugin had taken up his post in Washington.<sup>41</sup> Stone had first cooperated with Soviet intelligence in 1936, according to Kalugin, but stopped in 1956, furious over Moscow’s invasion of Hungary (rather than Nikita Khrushchev’s speech denouncing Iosif Stalin). Bachrach observed that Kalugin was quite specific at times about what he did and did not know about that earlier relationship. “I do not know how much money [Stone] took. But he took some money, I know that for sure,” Kalugin said.<sup>42</sup>

Kalugin then described the pitch he had made to re-recruit Stone during their first lunch at Harvey’s. “I told Stone, ‘My good friends in Moscow send you their best regards.’ Absolutely, he understood what I meant.” The 1960s relationship did not involve any money changing hands and stemmed solely from Stone’s ideological sympathy for socialism. “I represent the new genera-

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Admits KGB Interrogated Americans,” *The New York Times*, 22 January 1992, p. A2. Then, after his 1994 memoir came out, Kalugin again came under attack, but in reverse: U.S. intelligence circles criticized him for not disclosing more about KGB activities to which he was privy. Walter Pincus, “Soviet Ex-Spy Raps Opponents of Green Card,” *The Washington Post*, 5 September 1997, p. A19.

39. Sciolino, “KGB Telltale Is Tattling, But Is He Telling U.S. All?” p. A1.

40. Steven Lee Myers, “In Treason Trial, Echoes of Soviet Past and KGB Secrets,” *The New York Times*, 11 June 2002, p. A3.

41. Bachrach, “Traveling Fellow” p. 21.

42. *Ibid.*

tion of Soviets,” Kalugin said he had told Stone. “There have been changes in my country since Khrushchev’s reforms, since Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin, since Hungary, and there’s a desire on the part of many Soviets to move forward.”<sup>43</sup>

The relationship that ensued was “fruitful,” Kalugin added:

I paid for lunches; he was happy to share with me what he had learned on Capitol Hill or the White House. He had a wide range of friends, and that was good because he would provide us with some tips or information. . . . Oh, there was no classified information—but look, the Soviet intelligence network cared about information that would serve the political purpose of influencing operations . . . of manipulating public opinion, of misleading, weakening [the United States]. Injuring it. . . .

[H]is column would also be used for placing some disinformation, don’t forget that. I would tell him something which I would like him to use, and he would oblige. That was normal procedure.<sup>44</sup>

This version of Kalugin’s relationship with Stone thus clarified as well as contradicted earlier accounts. Stone, once again, was not just a journalism contact and one-time “fellow traveler” but a source and an agent. Most notably, for the first time Kalugin also alleged that Stone had not merely published articles he would have written anyway, but supposedly served as a conduit for disinformation.

Kalugin’s description of how the relationship ended in 1968 also included an interesting point he had not made earlier.

Tell me, if our relationship had been one of just a regular journalist meeting a press officer from the Soviet embassy—and I did, in fact, meet with so many ordinary journalists simply as a press officer. Well, the correspondent might be critical of what we did in Czechoslovakia and denounce it, yes. But would he cut off relations with me? No. Would he have gotten so emotional? It was because Stone was so personally involved with our government, a government that violated international law, that he got so upset, and cut off all contact with us. . . . He found it shocking. He was betrayed.<sup>45</sup>

Kalugin also explained to Bachrach why his account of the relationship resembled an accordion—contracting and expanding with regularity, depending on who was doing the asking. Bachrach had openly wondered why Kalugin’s answers were at odds with statements he made to MacPherson in 2003 when he was interviewed for MacPherson’s biography of Stone. For ex-

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43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

ample, MacPherson had quoted Kalugin as saying that out of fondness for Stone he did “not feed [Stone] disinformation, which he would do to other journalists.”<sup>46</sup>

“Let’s put it this way,” Kalugin told Bachrach. “There’s a difference when I speak to some writer I don’t know.”<sup>47</sup>

## The Venona Intercepts

Although the controversy Kalugin precipitated never completely died down, by the mid-1990s it had become stalemated. Stone’s detractors maintained that Kalugin had told the essential truth the first time around, if only because it would have been a remarkable gaffe for a KGB major-general to use a term of art like “agent” if Stone had never been anything more than a fellow traveler who was a “useful contact.” Those partial to Stone, meanwhile, found ample refuge in Kalugin’s subsequent denials and back-pedaling.

Then, in 1995, the CIA and U.S. National Security Agency (NSA), under prodding from Senator Daniel P. Moynihan, began to release the super-secret Venona intercepts of encrypted Soviet communications. These messages, which included KGB and Soviet military intelligence (GRU) cable traffic between Soviet outposts in the United States and the Center, had been intercepted by the U.S. Army’s Signal Intelligence Service (the precursor to the NSA) from 1941 to 1946. The intercepted cables—numbering hundreds of thousands, the vast majority of them from the war years—showed that at least 330 Americans, most of them members of the Communist Party USA (CPUSA), aided and abetted Soviet espionage, counterespionage, and active measures in the United States. The intercepts thus formed the blueprint for the U.S. government’s understanding of clandestine Soviet activities in the United States at the onset of the Cold War, although fewer than 3,000 of the intercepts were ever decrypted and many of those not in full.<sup>48</sup>

The Venona decrypts were released in six tranches in the mid-1990s, and when the third release occurred in March 1996 it contained four messages from September–December 1944. The first, third, and fourth messages men-

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46. MacPherson, “*All Governments Lie*,” p. 326.

47. Bachrach, “Traveling Fellow,” p. 21.

48. Robert Louis Benson and Michael Warner, eds., *VENONA: Soviet Espionage and the American Response* (Washington, DC: U.S. National Security Agency/Central Intelligence Agency, 1996), pp. vii–xxxii. One may fairly assume that useful information is still hidden in the tens of thousands of messages that were intercepted yet defied decryption and that critical information may have been communicated but not intercepted by the U.S. Army.



tioned a person code-named “Blin” (or “Pancake” in English). The second referred to an “I. Stone” in plain text.<sup>49</sup> In the “Comments” portion of each of the four messages, the NSA, working in concert with the FBI, had also listed the real person behind each codename and clarified, if necessary, the reference to the plain-text name. “Blin” and “I. Stone” had been identified as Isidor Feinstein Stone in February 1951.<sup>50</sup> This information, in some respects, was everything that Kalugin’s story was not: documented and specific. But ultimately, as with Kalugin’s recollection, the Venona messages tended to raise more questions than they could possibly answer.

The first cable, dated 13 September 1944, was a message to Moscow from Stepan Apresyan, nominally the Soviet vice-consul in New York, but in actuality the acting chief of the New York *rezidentura*, the KGB’s main operational base in the United States. Apresyan described an effort to contact “Blin” “from a legal point of view.” This meant that the KGB was not initially seeking to recruit “Blin” as an agent but hoping to establish a relationship whereby “Blin” would be an overt contact and source of information. Apresyan reported that Vladimir Pravdin, a KGB officer posing as a journalist for the Soviet Union’s TASS news agency, had tried three times to meet “Blin” in Washington but that “Blin” each time had declined, citing a busy travel schedule. In addition, Pravdin’s colleague at TASS, a dependable CPUSA member (and KGB agent) named Samuel Krafzur, had “carefully attempted to sound” “Blin” out, but “Blin” had not reacted to Krafzur’s overtures, ei-

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49. One July 1943 message from the fourth Venona release (July 1996) also mentioned a “Stone” in plain text. This may also have been a reference to I. F. Stone given the context of the message, which mentioned a trip to Washington by “Randolph,” an unidentified person who was probably a Soviet GRU agent, for the purpose of collecting information, apparently overtly, from several Washington-based correspondents, including Delbert Clarke, then bureau chief for *The New York Times*. See Venona Nos. 1172 and 1173, KGB New York to Moscow, 19 July 1943.

50. Although the Venona messages sometimes used real names in the text, far more often the NSA had to work in conjunction with FBI and other agencies to identify the person referred to by a code name. Sometimes collateral information contained in the messages made this a relatively easy task. In other cases, identification required extensive field investigations by FBI agents. Hundreds of Venona code names were identified in this manner, but at least as many defied all efforts to uncover the real person referenced because the collateral information available was too general to make an identification. According to Guttenplan’s biography, which makes the greatest use of the Freedom of Information Act with respect to Stone, the four messages from late 1944 were deciphered in late 1949 and passed to the FBI shortly afterward. A little more than one year later, on 1 February 1951, Robert J. Lamphere, the FBI special agent in charge of Venona-instigated investigations, wrote, “it would appear . . . I. F. Stone is identical with PANCAKE (BLIN).” Lamphere cited four reasons: Stone was a correspondent in Washington, and “Blin” was a correspondent; Stone had three children, and “Blin” had three children; the plain text reference to Stone in message two noted that he was avoiding Vladimir Pravdin, a KGB officer, and “Blin” was also reported as avoiding Pravdin in message one. Lastly, the plain text reference to Stone stated that Pravdin was considering whether to recruit Stone, and that same cable reflected approval of Pravdin’s effort by his boss. Meanwhile, the other three cables described Pravdin’s efforts to recruit “Blin.” Guttenplan, *American Radical*, pp. 270–271.

ther.<sup>51</sup> Because Krafzur had developed wide-ranging contacts as a reporter, he had been specifically recruited in the spring as a talent-spotting agent to cultivate “newspapermen’s circles in Washington.”<sup>52</sup>

“Blin” “occupies a very prominent position in the journalistic world and has vast connections,” Apresyan’s cable to the Center observed. This would have been an accurate assessment of Stone circa September 1944. The KGB *rezidentura* agreed with the idea of an approach to “Blin.” “To determine precisely ‘Blin’s’ relations to us we will commission ‘Echo’ to make a check.”<sup>53</sup> “Echo,” according to the NSA and FBI, was Bernard Schuster, a CPUSA member who served as its liaison to Soviet intelligence. Schuster (also known as Bernie Chester within the party) played a pivotal role in KGB operations in the United States and was often called on to vet and otherwise provide background material on prospective contacts or recruits.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, according to this message, a journalist code-named “Blin” had been designated someone worth approaching. It was not yet clear that “Blin” was willing to be a contact, according to the cable, or even that he would be regarded as suitable. Sometimes background reports were deemed unsatisfactory and candidates were dropped without even knowing that they had been considered. The KGB also had ways of exploiting people for useful purposes without actually signing them up.<sup>55</sup>

About a month later, a cable dated 10 October 1944, from acting *rezident* Apresyan to Moscow, mentioned an approach being made to an “I. Stone.” The cable reported that TASS’s Vladimir Pravdin was still trying to contact Stone, who remained elusive for the time being, and Samuel Krafzur had not been able to provide much assistance because Pravdin saw him too infrequently to “direct [Krafzur’s] work systematically.”<sup>56</sup> The cable did not refer to the complementary assignment given Bernard Schuster earlier.

This second coded message conveyed some of the urgency being attached to the effort to cultivate Washington-based journalists now that the formerly sleepy capital was obviously not going to return to its prewar ways. Washington would surely remain a locus of enormous power and decision-making af-

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51. Venona No. 1313, KGB New York to Moscow, 13 September 1944. On Krafzur, see John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *VENONA: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 242–243.

52. Venona No. 705, KGB New York to Moscow, 17 May 1944; and Haynes and Klehr, *VENONA*, 242–243.

53. Venona No. 1313, KGB New York to Moscow, 13 September 1944.

54. Haynes and Klehr, *VENONA*, pp. 222–224.

55. *Ibid.*, 42; and Venona Nos. 1433–1435, KGB New York to Moscow, 10 October 1944.

56. Venona Nos. 1433–1435, KGB New York to Moscow, 10 October 1944.

ter the war. With the end of World War II in sight by the fall of 1944, the KGB's networks in Washington (code-named "Karfaĝen," Russian for Carthage), needed to be bolstered rather quickly.<sup>57</sup> Journalists "are of great interest from a legal point of view," noted the cable, meaning that even overt contact with journalists whose stock-in-trade was the collection and exchange of information yielded intelligence deemed to have considerable value. "They are well informed and, although they do not say all they know, nevertheless they provide useful comments on the foreign policy of the [United States]."<sup>58</sup> The KGB obviously agreed with the maxim that good journalists know more from their beat than they ever manage to get into print.

A third cable from Apresyan, dated 23 October 1944, finally reported that Pravdin had succeeded in meeting "Blin." Key parts of the message were "unrecovered"; that is, not decrypted. Based on what was decrypted, "Blin" apparently conveyed that he was willing to enter into a relationship and was not averse to being remunerated, which meant that "Blin" was receptive to becoming at least a confidential contact: less than an agent, but something more than an overt/legal source.

[Pravdin] in Karfaĝen has made the acquaintance of Blin. Earlier [Pravdin] had several times tried to [contact] him personally and also through [Krafsur] but the impression had been created that "Blin" was avoiding a meeting. At the first conversation [Pravdin] told him that he had very much desired to make his acquaintance since he greatly valued his work as a correspondent. . . .

. . . "Blin" said that he had noticed our attempts to [contact] him, particularly the attempts of [Krafsur] and of people of the [Soviet embassy in Washington], but he had reacted negatively fearing the consequences. At the same time he implied that the attempts at rapprochement had been made with insufficient cau-

57. The pressure for results was also apparently creating some tension in the New York *rezidentura*. Apresyan appended some comments to the routine operational report in the cable, several of which indicated that a rivalry or a division of opinion existed between Apresyan, the acting *rezident*, and Pravdin, a senior case officer. Among these remarks was Apresyan's observation that although the KGB could undoubtedly continue to rely on so-called fellow countrymen—the term for members of the CPUSA—looking to the future, other agents and networks not associated with the party had to be built. If New York Governor Thomas Dewey managed to win the upcoming presidential election, Apresyan noted, "this source [fellow countrymen] may dry up." Apresyan even talked of moving the headquarters of the TASS News Agency to Washington from New York, presumably to ease Pravdin's overt access to the new concentration of reporters in Washington because of the war. If that could not be managed, Apresyan suggested, Pravdin should "organize the work of the editorial office so as to have more time for developing existing connections and starting up new ones. He should not carry the whole editorial office on his own shoulders; then he could go to [Washington] more, which is undoubtedly important." Venona Nos. 1433–1435, KGB New York to Moscow, 10 October 1944.

58. In addition to Stone, the 10 October 1944 cable stated that Pravdin was also considering Joseph Barnes, whose name was also given in plain text. Barnes was a Russian-speaking American journalist and former Moscow correspondent for *The New York Herald Tribune*. The appended commentary to the cable stated without explanation, "The signing up of Barnes is obviously not only inadvisable but unrealizable; however, it is desirable to use him without signing him up." *Ibid*.

tion and by people who were insufficiently responsible. To [Pravdin's] reply that naturally we did not want to subject him to unpleasant complications, "Blin" gave him to understand that he was not refusing his aid but [one should] consider that he had three children and did not want to attract the attention of the [FBI]. To [Pravdin's] question how he considered it advisable to maintain liaison "Blin" replied that he would be glad to meet but he rarely visited [New York]. . . .

Blin's fear is primarily explained by his unwillingness to spoil his career. Materially he is well secured. He earns as much as 1500 dollars a month but, it seems, he would not be averse to having a supplementary income. For the establishment of business contact with him we are insisting on [*unrecovered*] reciprocity. For the work is needed a qualified [*unrecovered*] Washington. Telegraph your opinion.<sup>59</sup>

Only one more item in the Venona project mentions "Blin," and it does not provide much insight into what happened after October 1944. In late December 1944, just after the Germans launched an unexpected offensive on the Western front, Pravdin conveyed to Moscow information that he had managed to glean from speaking with four journalists with sources inside the U.S. War Department. "The general staff of the [United States] is very much alarmed at the German offensive which may delay for several months the renewal of the American general offensive which is calculated to crush Germany in concert with us," Pravdin reported.<sup>60</sup> One of the four journalists was not identified except by a codename that the NSA and FBI never cracked. Another, Raymond Gram Swing, an influential and liberal radio commentator, was named in plain text. The remaining two journalists, according to the NSA and FBI, were "Blin" and "Bumblebee"—I. F. Stone and syndicated columnist Walter Lippmann.<sup>61</sup>

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59. Venona No. 1506, KGB New York to Moscow, 23 October 1944.

60. Venona No. 1805, KGB New York to Moscow, 23 December 1944.

61. The FBI's 1951 identification of "Blin" as Stone has also been challenged on the grounds that the bureau's own documents reveal how weak the supporting evidence is. As Myra MacPherson, one of Stone's biographers put it, "Hoover's sleuthing attempts to identify Stone as "Blin" provide instructive glimpses of bumbling activity. . . . FBI memos seemed as padded and hyped as any Russian agent's." MacPherson and Guttenplan cite doubts and alternatives freely expressed in the FBI's own memoranda from March to September 1951, the height of the bureau's investigation into Stone, to underscore the lack of positive proof that Stone and "Blin" were one and the same. A memorandum from April suggested that "Ernest K. Lindley was perhaps a better suspect and . . . I. F. Stone would not appear to be identical with Blin." Yet these same documents evince a diligent, if plodding, pursuit of "Blin"'s true identity rather than a rush to judgment about Stone. For example, although Lindley also fit the description of a prominent journalist who had three children, given his moderate views, Lindley—a Rhodes scholar and the Washington bureau chief for *Newsweek* magazine—was an unlikely fit. There is no doubt that Lindley had much to offer. During World War II, he was the leader of a small group of veteran reporters who received regular briefings on sensitive military and diplomatic matters directly from General George C. Marshall and other high officials, including Secretary of State Cordell Hull. One Venona message from 1943 reported on information gleaned from Lindley by an

The last message suggests that overt contact, at least, had been established with “Blin,” which supports Kalugin’s assertion of a pre-1956 relationship. Beyond this, Venona was silent on the parameters of any relationship between the KGB and “Blin.”

## The Vassiliev Notebooks

Vassiliev’s archival notes provide compelling primary information about the relationship between Stone and Soviet intelligence in the mid-to-late 1930s. They also validate the FBI’s February 1951 finding that Stone was the “Blin” mentioned in the intercepted Venona messages and corroborate at least portions of Kalugin’s account.

The first archival reference to Stone noted by Vassiliev was taken from a letter dated 13 April 1936 and dispatched from the New York *rezidentura*. The letter simply notes the identity of a new codename: “‘Blin’ (‘Liberal’s’ lead)—Isidor Feinstein, a commentator for the *New York Post*.”<sup>62</sup> The year—

unidentified Soviet intelligence officer or agent. The information was gained openly, however, and Lindley’s name was used in plain text, with no reference to the code-name “Blin.” In September 1951 the bureau ruled out the possibility that Lindley was “Blin.” It would be grounds for suspicion if the FBI had never expressed the slightest doubt during its six-month investigation, or, in light of Stone’s well-publicized animus toward J. Edgar Hoover, if the bureau had failed to investigate alternative possibilities. Neither was the case. See MacPherson, “*All Governments Lie*,” p. 325; Guttenplan, *American Radical*, pp. 273–275, 518; Kenneth G. Crawford, “Commentator, Author, Columnist Ernest K. Lindley Dies,” *The Washington Post*, 2 July 1979, p. C4; and Venona Nos. 1312–1313, KGB New York to Moscow, 9 August 1943. Another argument invoked to suggest that “Blin” was not Stone is that in the Venona intercepts, “Blin” was apparently afraid of bringing himself to J. Edgar Hoover’s attention. Stone, by contrast, was one of Hoover’s most relentless and fearless critics at a time when Hoover was consolidating his power in Washington and generally becoming immune to congressional and journalistic oversight. “Since Stone was not afraid of attacking Hoover and “Blin” was afraid of Hoover, Stone was not “Blin,” concludes the official I. F. Stone website. But a more persuasive and less specious interpretation would be that having publicly attacked Hoover, Stone was acutely mindful of the dangers of engaging in any contact. Venona No. 1506, the third of the four cables that mentioned “Blin,” did not convey “Blin”’s absolute refusal to enter into a relationship, only that “Blin” wanted the proper precautions taken and did not want to act recklessly, thereby attracting the FBI’s attention unnecessarily. But he certainly expressed a willingness to defy the bureau, according to the cable’s language. See Athan G. Theoharis, ed., with Tony G. Poveda, Susan Rosenfeld, and Richard Gid Powers, *The FBI: A Comprehensive Reference Guide* (Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 1999), pp. 14–16; “The False Charges against I. F. Stone”; MacPherson, “*All Governments Lie*,” p. 314; and Venona No. 1506, KGB New York to Moscow, 23 October 1944. Finally, of course, Alexander Vassiliev’s notebooks provide confirmation of 176 identifications made by U.S. government agencies working from the Venona intercepts. Only four discrepancies emerged. Thus, although the equating of Stone with “Blin” is a fair question to raise, Stone was undoubtedly “Blin,” just as Alger Hiss has been proven to be the “Ales” code-named in the Venona intercepts. See Eduard Mark’s article in this special issue of the *Journal of Cold War Studies*. See also Eduard Mark, “Who Was VENONA’s ‘ALES’? Cryptanalysis and the Hiss Case,” *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Autumn 2003), pp. 45–72; John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, “The New McCarthyism,” 11 April 2007, [http://www.washingtondecoded.com/site/2007/04/the\\_new\\_mccarthy.html](http://www.washingtondecoded.com/site/2007/04/the_new_mccarthy.html); and John Ehrman, “The Mystery of ‘ALES’: Once Again, the Alger Hiss Case,” *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (December 2007), pp. 29–38.

62. “Letter dated 13.04.36,” KGB File 3463, v. 1, p. 212, in Alexander Vassiliev, *Black Notebook*,

1936—is a point of some significance, as is the reference to “Isidor Feinstein.” In 2006, during the interview with Judy Bachrach, Kalugin mentioned 1936 as the year of Stone’s original recruitment.<sup>63</sup> In addition, Vassiliev’s note was accurate in that Stone was still known as Isidor Feinstein in April 1936; he did not change his byline to I. F. Stone until late the following year. The only inexactitude, albeit an easily understandable one, was the reference to Stone’s occupation. He was not a commentator but an editorial writer for the *New York Post*, and he was also the personal favorite of *Post* publisher J. David Stern, one of the most prominent pro-Roosevelt newspaper owners in the country.

The person apparently responsible for suggesting that Stone might be recruited was “Liberal,” that is, Frank L. Palmer, a former managing editor of the Federated Press (FP), a non-profit agency fashioned as a left-wing alternative to the Associated Press. The FP was headquartered near Manhattan’s Union Square, the vortex of left-wing activity in New York.<sup>64</sup> Palmer himself was one of the earliest KGB assets in U.S. journalistic circles, having secretly joined the CPUSA after a trip to the Soviet Union in 1927. Subsequently, he also became a KGB agent. His journalistic endeavors gave Soviet intelligence entrée to a variety of persons and matters of interest, and Palmer functioned as both a talent-spotter and recruiter.<sup>65</sup> The connection to “Isidor Feinstein” may have been facilitated because Stone’s younger brother by five years, Marcus, who was also a journalist, worked for the FP during this same period. But Stone was likely acquainted with Palmer in any case.<sup>66</sup>

The next archival document pertaining to “Blin” that attracted Vassiliev’s notice was a letter to Moscow from New York dated 20 May 1936. The letter reported that Stone had agreed to engage in some classic intelligence tasks that had nothing to do with his journalistic work. According to Vassiliev’s notes, “relations with ‘Blin’ have entered ‘the channel of normal operational work.’ He went to Washington on assignment for his newspaper. Connections in the State Department and Congress. Knows Prince.”<sup>67</sup> The observa-

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p. 23. All references to Vassiliev’s notebooks are to the English translation by Philip Redko and Steven Shabad, which uses the English translation “Pancake” instead of “Blin.” The latter will be used here for consistency.

63. Bachrach, “Traveling Fellow,” p. 22. In the revised memoir, however, Kalugin recalls the year as 1938. See Kalugin, *Spymaster*, p. 80.

64. In the mid-1920s, the British stumbled across information showing that FP bureaus in London and Paris were involved with Soviet espionage. See Nigel West and Oleg Tsarev, *The Crown Jewels: The British Secrets at the Heart of the KGB Archives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 31.

65. John Earl Haynes, Harvey Klehr and Alexander Vassiliev, *Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 164–168.

66. Cottrell, *Izzy*, pp. 20, 56.

67. “Letter dated 20.5.36,” KGB file 3463, v. 1, p. 283, in Vassiliev, *Black Notebook*, p. 23.

tion that Stone knew “Prince” was in all likelihood a reference to Frank Prince, an investigator for the Anti-Defamation League, a Jewish organization that funneled intelligence about anti-Semitic and far-right organizations to many journalists in the 1930s.

This same letter of 20 May also conveyed some information “Blin” sought to share:

“Blin” reported that Karl Von Wiegand works in Berlin as a correspondent for the Hearst agency “Universal Service.” He had been ordered to maintain friendly relations with Hitler, which was supposedly dictated by the fact that the German press was buying the agency’s information.

Hearst is in a deal with German industry to supply the latter with a large consignment of copper.

[Von] Wiegand does not agree with Hearst’s policy. [He turned to “Blin”’s boss for advice. The latter arranged a meeting for him with Roosevelt in ’35.<sup>68</sup>

Though seemingly innocuous, this information actually came in response to a direct request from Moscow for information that would help to discredit the Hearst chain. The newspapers owned by William Randolph Hearst were of particular concern to Soviet intelligence in the mid-1930s. The Hearst newspaper empire was justifiably considered the most right-wing in the country, with a presence in two dozen cities. Hearst’s power to mold public opinion, along with his well-known antipathy toward the Soviet Union, which the KGB credited to German influence, made the publisher an intelligence target. “It would be of considerable interest for us to acquire compromising material on Hearst concerning his connection (especially financial) with the Nazis,” Moscow had instructed its U.S. stations. “It is desirable to acquire an internal source at Hearst’s [organization] standing close to the head of this concern.”<sup>69</sup>

“Blin”’s information about Karl Von Wiegand, Hearst’s chief foreign correspondent, was undoubtedly of interest. Von Wiegand is all but forgotten now, but at the time he was enormously influential. He had made his reputation covering armed conflicts around the world since 1911, particularly during World War I, when his German background gave him access to many German leaders, resulting in several sensational scoops. He was considered so knowledgeable about international affairs that Colonel E. M. House, President Woodrow Wilson’s chief wartime adviser, sought Von Wiegand’s counsel.<sup>70</sup>

68. *Ibid.*, pp. 23–24.

69. Allen Weinstein and Alexander Vassiliev, *The Haunted Wood: Soviet Espionage in America—The Stalin Era* (New York: Random House, 1999), p. 31.

70. “Karl Von Wiegand Dies at 86; Hearst Foreign Correspondent,” *The New York Times*, 8 June 1961, p. 35.

Von Wiegand was apparently troubled by Hearst's affinity for Nazi rule, and, as Stone reported, turned to Stone's own publisher, J. David Stern, for advice. Stern was known for his contacts inside Franklin Roosevelt's administration, including the president himself, who treated Stern as a trusted adviser, insofar as Roosevelt really took advice from outsiders.

Inside information about the Hearst chain was valuable in the extremely intense battle being waged by all sides to shape U.S. public opinion and, simultaneously, thwart the presumed influence of the other side. Stone's information was useful because the KGB apparently contemplated making an approach to Von Wiegand, knowing of his disdain for Adolf Hitler's Germany.<sup>71</sup> If nothing else, Stone was probably delighted to share what he had learned. Since 1922, when Stone was fourteen years old and had published with a schoolmate a short-lived, five-cent monthly called *Progress*, he had been attacking William Randolph Hearst.<sup>72</sup> Stone had persisted in repeatedly criticizing Hearst in the editorial pages of the *New York Post*—something that was not particularly controversial, inasmuch as the Hearst newspapers routinely referred to the “New Deal” as the “Raw Deal.”<sup>73</sup>

Lastly, the 20 May letter also relayed information about the first fruits from “Blin”'s operational activities—specifically, his role as a talent-spotter, that is, one who helps identify and recruit agents.<sup>74</sup> In the tense years leading up to World War II, one of the American nationals the KGB pinned its hopes on was William E. Dodd, Jr., son of the U.S. ambassador to Germany.<sup>75</sup> “Blin” (Stone) played a significant role in the recruitment of Dodd, originally code-named “Boy,” and later, “President.”

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71. The KGB could entertain the idea seriously because, as Vassiliev's notes reflect, Von Wiegand's daughter, Charmion, had been married since 1932 to Joseph Freeman, a prominent pro-Communist critic, author, and “friend to the USSR.” Freeman was one of the original five editors of *New Masses* when it was founded in 1926, although by 1936 he was falling into disfavor. See “Letter dated 20.5.36,” KGB File 3463, v. 1, p. 287, in Vassiliev, *Black Notebook*, p. 24; and “Joseph Freeman, Author, 67 Dies,” *The New York Times*, 11 August 1965, p. 35.

72. MacDougall, “I. F. Stone Achieves Success,” p. 22.

73. After the 1936 election, for example, a *Post* editorial, almost certainly written by I. F. Stone, labeled Hearst “Public Enemy No. 1” and a “disciple of Hitler . . . [who] used Hitler's tactics” in the 1936 campaign. “Contemptible” is a mild word to describe [Hearst's] personal attacks upon the president and his attempt to make Communism the paramount issue of the campaign.” “Democracy Triumphs,” *New York Post*, 4 November 1936, p. 18.

74. A talent-spotting agent was an “intelligence service agent used to identify individuals in a target country who may be of interest as potential candidates for recruitment, to carry out an initial assessment and to create suitable conditions for an intelligence officer to make contact with them. Talent-spotting agents are recruited from people whose job or social position gives them the opportunity to have contact with the kinds of people in whom the intelligence service is interested.” See Mitrokhin, *KGB Lexicon*, 150–151.

75. According to Andrew and Mitrokhin, Dodd initially was considered to be on a par with such recruits as Laurence Duggan, Michael Straight, and Harry Dexter White. See Andrew and Mitrokhin, *Sword and Shield*, p. 106.



Vassiliev's notes about the recruitment observe that Dodd was also present at the 1935 meeting between Von Wiegand and President Roosevelt arranged by J. David Stern:

Dodd, Jr. takes part in anti-fascist work. He studied at the university in Berlin. He was supposed to have gone to Germany. He had wanted to collect information about the Olympics in order to sabotage them.

"Blin" established contact with Dodd. We wanted to recruit him and put him to work on the State Department line. "Blin" should tell Dodd that he has the means to connect him with an anti-fascist organization in Berlin.<sup>76</sup>

Dodd moved in elite circles and was well educated. He held a B.A. from the University of Chicago (where his father had been a noted professor of American history before becoming ambassador in 1933) and a Ph.D. from the University of Berlin. His father's appointment to Germany had been typical of Roosevelt's shrewd approach to ambassadorships: sending a "Jeffersonian Democrat" like the elder Dodd to Berlin was an unmistakable sign of the president's antipathy toward the Nazi regime.<sup>77</sup> The new ambassador engaged in frequent recriminations with the Nazi regime, many of which became public, and barely disguised his revulsion at the unholy trio of Hitler, Joseph Goebbels, and Hermann Göring. Ambassador Dodd was little more than midway through his four-and-a-half years as ambassador to Berlin when the effort to recruit the younger Dodd commenced in the spring of 1936, shortly after his sister, Martha, had volunteered her services to the KGB.<sup>78</sup>

The younger William Dodd needed little prodding from Stone to become involved in "underground" anti-fascist work.<sup>79</sup> Vassiliev's next entry about Dodd's recruitment comes from a letter of 1 August 1936 to Moscow.

76. "Letter dated 20.5.36," KGB File 3463, v. 1, pp. 285–287, in Vassiliev, *Black Notebook*, p. 24.

77. Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 533.

78. Martha Dodd would also enlist her husband, Alfred K. Stern, in espionage. Weinstein and Vassiliev, *Haunted Wood*, pp. 50–71.

79. Vassiliev's notes regarding William Dodd, along with other archival sources, reveal that when Dodd received an invitation to work as a secretary to Lord Robert Cecil, a prominent British peace activist, who was helping to organize a World Peace Congress in Brussels in the fall of 1936, this invitation was of great interest not only to the KGB, but also to the Comintern and Earl Browder, the head of the CPUSA, who was actively assisting the KGB in its secret work. "Son of USA ambassador . . . going [to] Europe [in] June offering [to] work for Lord Cecil [at] World Peace Congress," read the message from Browder to Georgi Dimitrov, head of the Comintern. "Recommend they accept him [Dodd, Jr.]" "Letter dated 20.5.36," KGB File 3463, v. 1, p. 288, in Vassiliev, *Black Notebook*, p. 24; and Message, "Dimitrov from Earl [Browder]," 16 May 1936, in Russian State Archive of Social-Political History, Fond 495, Opis 184, Delo 33. Moscow was apparently hoping to influence peace groups to emphasize collective security against the fascist menace rather than disarmament and international treaties outlawing war. See Augur, "British Peace Body Alters Arms Aims," *The New York Times*, 22 October 1936, p. 7.

The letter conveyed several details from a conversation between “Blin” and the new agent Moscow had dubbed “Boy”:

“Blin” gave “Boy” coordinates for a certain George Burkhard in Berlin.

“If we [*sic*] manages to contact ‘Boy’ in the near future, this could be used to prevent him from connecting with openly radical groups.

“From ‘Boy’<sup>s</sup> conversation with “Blin,” we learned that:

- “1. ‘Boy’ is aware that his sister took part in underground anti-fascist work;
- “2. ‘Boy’<sup>s</sup> father also maintained a connection with anti-fascist groups in Germany and received them at the embassy;
- “3. . . .
- “4. The last name of the employee of the American embassy who is suspected of having ties with the fascists and was the go-between for General Electric; and
- “5. The American military attaché in Berlin gave ‘Boy’<sup>s</sup> father information that the Germans were planning to go to war with the USSR in the fall of 1936.”<sup>80</sup>

Despite what would seem to be an auspicious start, the KGB’s high hopes for William Dodd, Jr. were never realized. He proved to be a poor agent, seemingly incapable of passing along more than “modest tidbits of embassy scuttlebutt.”<sup>81</sup> In contrast to Soviet wishes, he did a bad job of hiding his anti-fascist sympathies. Even before he had arrived in Berlin, he could not resist testifying before an extra-parliamentary hearing organized by the British Labour Party in September 1936 to describe how, while on holiday, he had witnessed arms shipments from Germany and Italy being ferried to Spanish rightists despite international pledges of non-intervention.<sup>82</sup> Once in Germany, William Dodd, Jr. quickly became known as a “violent Nazi hater,” and his activities reportedly contributed to the desire expressed by Berlin that Ambassador Dodd be replaced by a more professional diplomat.<sup>83</sup> In any case, Dodd’s usefulness as an agent in Berlin came to an end when his father’s tenure as ambassador ended in late 1937. The younger Dodd’s contributions were overshadowed all along by his energetic and flamboyant sister, who routinely disclosed to Moscow her father’s correspondence with Washington, among other things.<sup>84</sup>

Vassiliev’s notebooks, despite their volume, do not contain any more de-

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80. “Letter dated 1.08.36,” KGB File 3463, v.2, pp. 41–42, in Vassiliev, *Black Notebook*, p. 24.

81. Weinstein and Vassiliev, *Haunted Wood*, p. 66.

82. Charles A. Selden, “Dodd, Jr. Testifies Rebels Get Arms,” *The New York Times*, 2 October 1936, p. 13.

83. Drew Pearson, “The Washington Merry-Go-Round,” *The Washington Post*, 29 April 1943, p. B11.

84. Weinstein and Vassiliev, *Haunted Wood*, pp. 55–56.

tails about “Blin”’s operational activities following the recruitment of William Dodd, Jr., in 1936.<sup>85</sup> They contain only a general entry, dating from 1938, that lists “Blin” as one of 39 agents controlled by the New York *rezidentura* in the third quarter of that year.<sup>86</sup> The dearth of detail may have stemmed from the nature of Stone’s role. Lesser agents—such as couriers, talent-spotters, recruiters, vetters, safe-house hosts, and other intermediaries between KGB officers and agents—were just as necessary to intelligence networks as experienced case officers and highly valued espionage agents. But unless these lesser agents were semi-professional or functioned as agent-handlers of multiple sources (as Elizabeth Bentley did), they did not tend to appear often in KGB messages because their functions were routine and episodic. Then, too, Stone may have contributed very little after his initial burst of activity. That the relationship cooled seems all but certain, if only because the October 1944 effort to approach Stone was described in the Venona decrypt as a “rapprochement.” That characterization would be inaccurate unless there had been a falling out or hiatus.<sup>87</sup>

In addition, Stalin’s cleansing of his security services in 1937–1938 probably affected the scope of Stone’s role. The terror inside the Soviet Union was replicated abroad by a purge of intelligence officers’ ranks. Hundreds of KGB and GRU officers were recalled to Moscow, summarily arrested, and often executed. Many *rezidenturas* all but ceased to function in 1937–1938 because of a shortage of personnel, as “the hunt for ‘enemies of the people’ replaced intelligence collection.”<sup>88</sup> Contacts between KGB case officers and their American sources and agents, as well as operations in general, undoubtedly declined as a consequence.

Not until late 1940, following the assassination of Leon Trotsky, did the emphasis shift back to collecting intelligence and rebuilding agent networks

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85. After the younger William Dodd’s return to the United States he became a member of the American League against War and Fascism, a Communist-front group that was promptly dismantled following the Nazi and Soviet invasions of Poland in 1939. Dodd also engaged in a quixotic run for Congress in 1938 from Virginia, running against an arch-conservative and entrenched incumbent, Howard W. Smith, for the Democratic nomination. Although the KGB was skeptical about Dodd’s chances of success, it donated \$15,000 (in 2009 dollars) to his campaign. Dodd remained a source of information for years, passing along things he gleaned from his Washington contacts. But his “promise far exceeded his performance as a Soviet agent.” Dodd worked for the Federal Communications Commission until 1943, when he was investigated by the FBI and publicly charged by HUAC as belonging to subversive organizations. After a short stint with TASS in New York, Dodd’s career as an agent ended in July 1945. He died in 1952 in San Francisco, where he was working in the book section of Macy’s department store at the time. See Weinstein and Vassiliev, *Haunted Wood*, pp. 66–68; and “William E. Dodd, Jr., Son of Ambassador,” *The New York Times*, 19 October 1952, p. 87.

86. “Agents: (3rd qtr. of ’38),” KGB File 40159, v. 1, p. 253, in Vassiliev, *Black Notebook*, p. 101.

87. Venona No. 1506, KGB New York to Moscow, 23 October 1944.

88. Andrew and Mitrokhin, *Sword and Shield*, pp. 78, 85; and Weinstein and Vassiliev, *Haunted Wood*, p. 223.

overseas. By this time, however, the Nazi-Soviet pact had been signed and implemented, to the revulsion of fellow travelers like Stone. If the KGB was responsible for a decline in contact in the period prior to the outbreak of World War II, then Stone, in all likelihood, severed whatever relationship still existed by August 1939.

Only two notations in the Vassiliev notebooks even mention Stone during the early war years 1939 to 1943. Both entries reveal some inside knowledge about his activities as a journalist, but at arm's length. The first passing mention occurs in a KGB report involving Victor Perlo, who was an economist at several federal offices, including the War Production Board. According to Vassiliev, the report about Perlo noted that in 1942–1943, "'R.' ['Raid,' Perlo's codename] secretly helped 'Blin' compile materials for various exposés by the latter."<sup>89</sup> In a similar vein, two KGB documents about an agent named Stanley Graze, according to Vassiliev's notes, both mention Stone incidentally, once in plain text and the other time by his codename. Graze (codenamed "Dan") also worked at the War Production Board, and a 1943 report on him observed that his wife (codenamed "Dina") "worked as a secretary and assistant to a correspondent for the newspaper "*PM*"—I. F. Stone . . . serving as a courier between Stone and his secret informants in government agencies."<sup>90</sup> The second document noted by Vassiliev restated the same fact: that Graze's wife "was 'Blin's' personal secretary, maintaining ties with the latter's informants in government agencies."<sup>91</sup>

After 1943, Vassiliev's notebooks add one detail to Vladimir Pravdin's effort, as described in Venona, to reestablish ties to Stone in October 1944. Vassiliev's notes about a cable dated 1 June 1945 do not specify on what terms a relationship was renewed, but when combined with the Venona decrypt from 23 December 1944 they confirm that Stone had agreed to reestablish at least overt contact.

Vassiliev's notes from June 1945 show that Stone was viewed as an asset to be exploited by Pravdin at a critical juncture: President Roosevelt had recently died, and the KGB was scrambling to figure out the new administration of Harry Truman. Three journalists were named in the message in addition to Stone. Two were fully recruited KGB agents (IDE, or Samuel Krafzur, and "Grin," who was John Spivak), and the third was syndicated columnist Walter Lippmann, code-named "Bumblebee."<sup>92</sup> The KGB had long deemed

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89. "Biography of V. Perlo (given by Vadim 29.12.44)," KGB File 45100, v. 1 "Raid," p. 45, in Alexander Vassiliev, *White Notebook #3*, p. 73; and Haynes, Klehr, and Vassiliev, *Spies*, pp. 271–272.

90. "Report on 'Dan,'" 8 June 1948, KGB File 43173, v. 6, p. 75, in Vassiliev, *Black Notebook*, p. 90.

91. "C/t from 'Vadim' dated 20 & 21 March 1945," KGB File 45100, v. 1 "Raid," p. 97, in Vassiliev, *White Notebook #3*, p. 76; and Haynes, Klehr, and Vassiliev, *Spies*, pp. 297–298.

92. Spivak, 1897–1981, was a journalist, author, and foreign correspondent who specialized in

Lippmann a major target, even though there was no chance he could be recruited, because of his prominence and the information that came his way but often could not be printed. The KGB made a special effort to develop sources close to him or otherwise extract information from him. In this regard, the KGB's greatest coup had occurred during the years 1941–1943, when it managed to recruit Lippmann's personal secretary, Mary Price, to spy on him.<sup>93</sup>

Lippmann's relationship with Pravdin was overt. The columnist knew of Pravdin only as a senior correspondent for the TASS news agency, and as such, attempted to elicit information from him about Soviet policies. In exchange, Lippmann volunteered his own insights about U.S. policy and personalities to Pravdin. Lippmann was unaware that he was actually talking with a skilled intelligence officer or that Pravdin viewed their meetings as opportunities to manipulate Lippmann as much as inform him. By contrast, Krafstur, Spivak, and Stone undoubtedly knew whom they were dealing with.

The key parts of the June 1945 message read:

Right now the cultivation of Truman's inner circle becomes exceptionally important. This is one of the [*rezidentura's*] main tasks. To fulfill this task, the following agent capabilities need to be put to the most effective use:

1. In journalistic circles—"Ide," "Grin," "Blin" . . . "Bumblebee." Through these people focus on covering the principal newspaper syndicates and the financial-political groups that are behind them; their relationships with Truman, the pressure exerted on him, etc.
2. At the Justice Department—"Sur." [Norman Bursler] . . .
3. At the Treasury Department—"Richard." [Harry Dexter White] . . .
4. At the Commerce Department—"Robert." [Nathan G. Silvermaster] . . .
5. In military circles—"Pilot" [William L. Ullman] and "Aileron." [Abraham G. Silverman] . . .

Besides the cultivation of political, public and military figures of interest to us, the above-mentioned probationers should be directed [to] cover Truman himself, his intentions, policies, etc., which they can do from the materials that are available at their agencies; on the basis of conversations with high-ranking officials, etc. . . .

What is of interest to us is information regarding the American government's actions and plans . . . to convert United States industry to peacetime operations. What cutbacks are being made or are planned with regard to war production;

exposés of "fascism, racism, and malfeasance in high office" for many publications in the 1920s and 1930s. He wrote for *The New York Herald Tribune*, *New York Journal*, *New York Post*, and *Esquire*, among other publications, and was a correspondent in Berlin and Moscow for the International News Service. He was also a secret member of the CPUSA who specialized in the investigation and exposure of rightists. See "John Spivak, Reporter and Political Crusader," *The New York Times*, 3 October 1981, p. 33; and Haynes, Klehr, and Vassiliev, *Spies*, pp. 160–164.

93. Haynes, Klehr, and Vassiliev, *Spies*, pp. 173–178.

how and where the manpower that will be freed up as a result of this will be deployed; plans for demobilization of the army in Europe and other parts of the world; plans for solving the host of problems that derive from that . . . ; how these problems will affect the domestic and foreign political situation of the United States.<sup>94</sup>

What is notable about this message is its reference to “agents” and “probationers,” the latter term being KGB terminology for an active source or spy. Not taking care to distinguish Lippmann (“Bumblebee”) from the others listed in this message indicates either a range of meanings about how the term “agent” was used or, more likely, simple laziness on the part of the cable’s author. Most of the other names were clearly agents in the fullest sense of that term. Where this leaves Stone (“Blin”) is unclear. Either Stone, like Lippmann, was sloppily lumped in with the others, or else he had moved at least one degree beyond being an overt contact.

In any case, the entries in Vassiliev’s notebooks show that Stone’s activities from 1936 to 1938 cannot be understood as anything other than those of a fully recruited and witting agent, willing to perform extracurricular tasks not related to his real job. Stone was not a “spy” in that he did not engage in espionage and had no direct access to classified documents. Nor is there any indication that he knowingly conveyed secret information from any of his sources inside the government to the KGB. But the relationship was not limited, as relationships with journalists often were, to overt contacts and the exchange of information. Stone not only conveyed privileged information but willingly took on tasks by agreeing to act as a talent spotter and courier to another agent. In addition, Vassiliev’s notes confirm what appeared to be the case from Venona: that after a hiatus of several years Stone was approached in late 1944 as the end of the war neared and that he agreed to reestablish contact.

## Implications

Treated discretely or even strung together, the allegations that dribbled out from 1992 until 2006 were not all that persuasive. There was ample reason to doubt that they amounted to much. Kalugin contradicted himself on more than one occasion, and there was no independent corroboration of the most serious iteration of his claim. Venona, despite hinting that Kalugin was correct in claiming that Stone had had a previous relationship, presented scant

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94. “Center to ‘Sergey’ 1.VI.45 cipher cable,” KGB File 35112, v. 2, pp. 135–142, in Alexander Vassiliev, *White Notebook #1*, pp. 56–57.

information that Stone was recruited. The most that could be said was that he had been approached in late 1944. Another factor in the equation, of course, was Stone's formidable reputation, which fostered disbelief. As John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr put it in their 1999 book on Venona: "That a journalist celebrated for his fierce independence and iconoclastic writings about American government officials could have collaborated with the Soviet government was regarded by many on the American left as impossible."<sup>95</sup>

The doubts are dispelled by Vassiliev's notebooks, which demonstrate that Stone was recruited as a witting agent in the 1930s. The notebooks also lend credence and context to the earlier (albeit disputed) Venona and Kalugin disclosures. Still, even an exhaustive examination of the information and its provenance leaves unanswered the most important question: What does it all mean?

Some detractors will likely seize on the latest information to reinforce their earlier dismissal of Stone as simply a Soviet "agent," the only difference being that now the evidence shows he was one before the onset of the Cold War too. That interpretation, however, would be as misleading as trying to sustain the pretense that Stone never had more than a casual and overt relationship with Soviet intelligence. Neither interpretation does justice to what was a complicated association.

The link to the KGB was hardly immutable; it was broken several times, mostly, and probably always, at Stone's initiative. Nor was the relationship identical each time. During each phase, Stone was at a different point in the long arc of his journalism career, and the geopolitical circumstances were also markedly different. Washington and Moscow were not universally perceived to be in a zero-sum relationship in 1936, to cite only one obvious distinction, as they were in 1946 and for decades after that.

Among the key questions that arise are: Did the variable, on-and-off relationship influence Stone's copious output of editorials, articles, and books? Were two of the qualities synonymous with Stone—his stubborn independence and insatiable curiosity—compromised?

A full-fledged biography, along with unhindered access to KGB archives, would be needed to present a truly integrated portrait. The latter seems as remote as ever, and an unfinished mosaic may be the most that can be pieced together. Still, based on the records available, along with the biographies published and Stone's own writings, one can lay out some tentative findings.

During the first phase of the relationship, from 1936 to 1939, Stone apparently acted out of ideological conviction like the vast number of U.S. citizens who agreed to help the Soviet Union covertly. Stone appears to have ra-

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95. Haynes and Klehr, *VENONA*, p. 247.

tionalized a relationship out of fear and conceit: fear over the immediate future and a conceit about the desirability and historical inevitability of socialism. He perceived fascism to be a clear-and-present danger, “capitalism’s misbegotten off-spring.”<sup>96</sup> That was matched by his fervent belief—which some would label a self-delusion—that the New Deal state and the world’s only socialist state were separated by just a few degrees, and could coexist amiably.

Using this logic, it was a virtuous act to cooperate with Soviet intelligence. Stone would actually be serving the best interests of his fellow citizens and the country. A socialist America, ushered in with the critical help of Communists, was inevitable, in his view. True, the CPUSA was rife with little Stalinists, and its official organ, the *Daily Worker*, was tedious. But if one looked past the sectarian strife, American Communists were on the “right” side of every major domestic issue, from abolishing the poll tax to the redistribution of income to the organization of Southern sharecroppers.<sup>97</sup> As Richard Rovere later observed: “The Communist Party seemed . . . an effectively organized agency of change, and if it happened to have a corrupt affiliate in Moscow, that did not foreclose . . . working with it here. Good Christians . . . knew what crimes were being committed daily in the name of their faith . . . but they did not on that account abandon their creed.”<sup>98</sup>

By almost any objective standard, the world situation did appear as dire in the spring of 1936 as Stone believed it to be. Nazi Germany was vigorously enforcing the so-called Nuremberg laws, encoded the previous September. The Roosevelt administration had so far been mute about Germany’s medieval-like persecution of its Jewish citizens, which was driving thousands of them into exile—that is, when they could find a refuge. Mounting concern over Germany was not confined to its internal repression and practices. In early March, Germany had brazenly violated the Versailles Treaty by remilitarizing the Rhineland. This first flexing of military might had met with a feckless response from the victors of World War I. Instead, the most vigorous opposition came from Moscow, which again called for the countries surrounding Germany to organize a collective security pact, a “front of peace-loving states.” Simultaneously, rumors emerged that Germany and Japan were secretly negotiating an alliance directed against the world’s only socialist state, an agreement that would eventually become known to the world as the “anti-Comintern pact” and herald the formation of the Axis Powers.

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96. I. F. Stone, “1937 Is Not 1914,” *The Nation*, 6 November 1937, p. 495.

97. Another indicator of Stone’s investment in the anti-fascist struggle emerged in 1942, when he sanctioned efforts to muzzle “pro-Axis termites” in the United States. This was a rare departure for Stone, who was otherwise an absolutist when it came to civil liberties. Cottrell, *Izzy*, p. 99.

98. Richard Rovere, *Final Reports: Personal Reflections on Politics and History in Our Time* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1984), p. 63.



Finally, in March 1936, Stalin had given an exclusive interview to Roy Howard, chairman of the Scripps-Howard newspaper chain. The Soviet dictator had claimed that the USSR was living up to the letter of its 1933 agreement not to engage in subversive activities in the United States, and he insisted that the two countries had no grounds for antagonism:

American democracy and the Soviet system can exist and compete peacefully, but one can never develop into the other. Soviet democracy will never evolve into American democracy or vice versa. [But] we can exist and develop peacefully if we do not indulge in too much mutual fault-finding about trifling things.<sup>99</sup>

Stalin's rare interview with Howard, who was no liberal, would have appealed enormously to Stone, as well as to other like-minded Americans, as it was surely calculated to do.<sup>100</sup> Stalin's assurance was a reaffirmation that a Popular Front against fascism was realizable, that Communism simply was a left-wing variant of the New Deal, and that both the Soviet Union and the United States were on the same right side of history.

To the extent that one concern dominated Stone's outlook in the mid-to-late 1930s, it was his surpassing belief that a collective security pact between the West and the USSR was sorely needed to confront and defeat fascism. Little else mattered by comparison, and perhaps nothing underscored the terrifying urgency of Stone's perception more than his decision to change his name in 1937, after the "Roosevelt recession" reinvigorated the far right. Fearing that fascism and anti-Semitism might infect the United States as it had Germany, Isidor Feinstein tried out a few bylines before finally settling on "I. F. Stone."<sup>101</sup> It was a concession to the times, and he "still felt badly about" it decades later.<sup>102</sup>

Apart from the tide of world-historic events, some personal factors may

99. Roy W. Howard, "Russia Ready to Fight, Stalin Warns Japan," *The Washington Post*, 5 March 1936, p. 9; and Roy W. Howard, "Stalin Says Russia Is Ready for Japan," *The New York Times*, 5 March 1936, p. 16.

100. The interview was promptly reprinted as "The Stalin-Howard Interview" by International Publishers in 1936 and widely distributed domestically by the CPUSA. This kind of treatment was usually reserved for tracts about Marxist-Leninist theory, which were supposed to have mass appeal.

101. Patner, *I. F. Stone*, p. 13. According to Cottrell, J. David Stern, publisher of the *New York Post*, also pressured Stone to change his surname because Stern wanted to make the newspaper seem "less Jewish." Cottrell, *Izzy*, p. 69.

102. Patner, *I. F. Stone*, p. 13. Around this same time, Stone joined the League of American Writers, a front organization dominated by Communists, and served as a delegate to its second congress in June 1937, which turned into a celebration of the Spanish republic, although the openly pro-Communist tone had vanished. Prominent writers who were anti-Stalinist were not invited to attend. See Cottrell, *Izzy*, pp. 63–64; Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, and Dan Georgakas, eds., *Encyclopedia of the American Left* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), pp. 33–34. Stone's third biographer, MacPherson, does not believe that Stone ever joined the League.

also have played a role in Stone's 1936 decision. In the 1930s, Stone was far from the emancipated journalist he would later become—the feisty reporter famously beholden to no one. He was cantankerous to be sure, but also enormously ambitious and tantalized by access, power, and other trappings he would later eschew, first out of necessity, later out of design. Of particular note was his friendship with Tommy Corcoran, a lawyer and prominent member of Roosevelt's so-called brain trust. As Jordan Schwarz wrote in *The New Dealers*, a history of the period, Stone and Corcoran

first got together in May 1936 when the newspaperman went looking for administration help in civil rights cases. They subsequently enjoyed a friendship of favors—Corcoran soliciting [Stone] for a job at the [*New York Post*] for Samuel Beer, to write four speeches on the Supreme Court and civil liberties, to write editorials denouncing the Court on power cases, and to support Robert H. Jackson for governor of New York. In turn [Stone] used Corcoran's political clout to get his father's temporary job at the Philadelphia Mint made permanent and to secure living and traveling expenses from [Supreme Court Justice Felix] Frankfurter and retailer Lincoln Filene while he drafted a book on the Constitution and minimum wage legislation.<sup>103</sup>

It is a mistake, in other words, to conflate the Stone captured in David Levine's indelible caricatures from the 1960s with the way Stone operated in the 1930s, when he played the influence game as shrewdly as any insider journalist on the make.

Another factor that may have impelled Stone to cooperate with Soviet intelligence was the strong sibling rivalry that existed between the eldest of the three Stone brothers, Isidor and Marcus. The jockeying can only have intensified once Marcus, who fashioned himself the more radical, joined the CPUSA while Izzy did not.<sup>104</sup> According to biographer Robert Cottrell, Isidor undoubtedly lectured his younger brother about the need to think and write independently and not become a party sycophant. But it may also be that his brother's membership, along with the scores of his friends who were card-carrying Communists, left Stone wondering whether his own political nerve and commitment were sufficient for the times. Was being a fellow traveler enough?<sup>105</sup> Did it suffice to sound the tocsin repeatedly in editorials for the

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103. Jordan A. Schwarz, *The New Dealers: Power Politics in the Age of Roosevelt* (New York: Vintage Book, 1993), 148. See also David McKean, *Tommy the Cork: Washington's Ultimate Insider from Roosevelt to Reagan* (South Royalton, VT: Steerforth Press, 2004), pp. 78, 93.

104. Cottrell, *Izzy*, p. 56.

105. Stone never hid his *pas d'ennemis à gauche* philosophy, as Nobile pointed out in 1974. Stone, in a television interview a year before his death, remarked that he had never been a Communist formally "but I was a fellow traveler." Stone's hardline sympathies during this period were mentioned by an anonymous former colleague at the *New York Post*. In an interview with the FBI, this colleague, who

*New York Post* or even in the pages of *The Nation* and *The New Republic*, then two of the most influential magazines in the country?<sup>106</sup>

Decades later Stone explained to Todd Gitlin: “I felt a newspaperman ought to serve the great currents of his time if he felt called upon to do so, if he was a radical, but not to tie up.”<sup>107</sup> Stone’s willingness to assist Soviet intelligence might have been a way of squaring two warring impulses: his need to be free of a party line (or enough self-knowledge to realize he could never work in that milieu) and his overwhelming sense that “progressive” forces opposed to Hitler ought to be aided insofar as it was within his power to do so—particularly when his younger brother and so many friends who were party members were in the vanguard.<sup>108</sup>

On the question of whether Stone’s involvement in operational tasks influenced his writing, the answer is complex, somewhere between no and maybe, depending on the time period. Stone was calling for collective security against Nazi Germany well before the Communist International endorsed the notion of a Popular Front in 1935, and he never wavered from that stance.<sup>109</sup> Accordingly, Stone found the Nazi-Soviet pact contemptible (though he

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openly admitted disliking Stone, contended that when Stone set up an editorial meeting at the *Post* with Earl Browder, then the head of the CPUSA, Stone feigned barely knowing Browder. See Nobile, *Intellectual Skywriting*, pp. 165–166; and MacPherson, “*All Governments Lie*,” pp. 294, 354.

106. Cottrell, *Izzy*, pp. 70–71. Stone began writing for *The Nation* and *The New Republic* in 1934, although for the first three years or so he wrote only about domestic issues.

107. I. F. Stone, interview by Todd Gitlin, 1985, in Todd Gitlin Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; copy courtesy of Gitlin and Myra MacPherson.

108. Stone by his very nature would have rebelled at being told what to write, do, or think. His home in New York in the late 1930s was a salon for every shade of leftist around: old radicals, Communists, socialists, Trotskyites, Lovestonites, progressives, and liberals, down to mere Rooseveltian Democrats. Stone reveled in the intellectual give-and-take and intense debates, and the only aspect he truly abhorred was rigid sectarianism: the leftist propensity for hair-splitting enervated the fight against the one true enemy, fascism.

109. Stone espoused this position almost from the moment Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933, well before the idea of a “Popular Front” uniting the bourgeois democracies and the Soviet Union became the approved line during the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, held in Moscow in the summer of 1935. Prior to the Comintern’s formal acceptance of a Popular Front against fascism, the only course acceptable was the “United Front” policy, which had been rationalized by the Comintern “to meet the perceived delay in the world-revolutionary process.” Under this approach, Communists worked in semi-concealment to dominate mass institutions like labor unions or political parties because only organizations secretly controlled by Communists were deemed suitable for an alliance with overtly Communist groups. Leftists of every other stripe were “social fascists,” effectively working to keep capitalism intact. Indeed, in keeping with their theoretical perspective at the time, Communists had initially welcomed fascism’s rise, on the grounds that it reflected capitalism’s “final crisis,” fascism being an advanced state of capitalism. When Hitler’s consolidation of power made it clear that fascism might not be a transitory phenomenon, Communist doctrine shifted to the Popular Front strategy. Being a premature “Popular Fronter” was an indicator of Stone’s independence; it was no small matter to stake out such a position prior to 1935. Such issues were of all-consuming interest to the American left in the 1930s. See Buhle, Buhle, and Georgakas, eds., *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, pp. 148, 591–592; and John Patrick Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), p. 173.

blamed Neville Chamberlain for it), and in all probability he terminated contact with the KGB in August 1939—assuming that the relationship had not already foundered months before that because of the Soviet purges.<sup>110</sup> Most importantly, during the critical period from the German and Soviet invasions of Poland in September 1939 to the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, Stone (after a few months' hesitation) became an ardent interventionist and leading “war-monger,” in Moscow’s new parlance.<sup>111</sup> Overall then, Stone’s position was a model of consistency and intellectual integrity—unwaveringly anti-fascist and in favor of a united front.

But it is also true that Stone’s association with the KGB may have been a factor, perhaps even a subconscious one, in how he perceived and wrote about two signal events in the late 1930s: the Spanish civil war and the show trials in Moscow—two instances of fellow traveling that ultimately cost Stone his job at the *New York Post*.<sup>112</sup> It would have been all too human to discount new, dissonant information that showed he had made a serious error in judgment.

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110. “All of us who felt that the Soviet Union was the core of the world front against fascism shared [the Communists’] indignation and contemptuous disbelief” when rumors about such an agreement began, Stone wrote. “It is my belief that Chamberlain knew a Russo-German agreement was a possibility and did all he could to *further it*” (emphasis added). Stone did predict, however, that Iosif Stalin was in for a rude surprise from Hitler. See Stone, “Chamberlain’s Russo-German Pact,” *The Nation*, 23 September 1939, pp. 313–316.

111. From September 1939 to April 1940, the period of the so-called Phony War, Stone initially editorialized that arms aid to the Franco-British alliance was the best way of keeping the United States out of what he still claimed was an “anti-fascist” war. As the Phony War dragged on, however, he wrote that “the struggle between the fascist and the democratic powers seems to me only an extension in intensified form of the imperialist struggle. . . . I see no issue here that warrants American intervention.” He feared that U.S. involvement in another “war to end wars” might end up in a “holy war” against the USSR. The stunning collapse of France galvanized Stone into becoming an interventionist, although even then *The Nation* lagged behind his old employer, the *New York Post*, which openly called for a declaration of war in July 1941. See “The Shape of Things,” *The Nation*, 30 September 1939, p. 335; “The Chicken or the Egg?” *The Nation*, 4 November 1939, pp. 500–501; “Dissenting Opinion,” *The Nation*, 9 March 1940, pp. 340–341; Cottrell, *Izzy*, pp. 86, 89, 92–93; and Sara Alpern, *Freda Kirchwey: A Woman of The Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 137.

112. Stone’s famous breach with his long-time employer and patron, J. David Stern, occurred in 1938. Stern had long been hostile to Communism and considered Stalin little better than Hitler. Under pressure from Catholic groups opposed to Soviet intervention in the Spanish civil war, Stern ordered a front-page editorial denouncing Stalin on 15 February 1938: “There can be no united front for democracy with enemies of democracy.” Fellow travelers were furious, and because a Popular Front was the sine qua non of Stone’s entire outlook, relations between the two men quickly deteriorated. When Stern published his memoirs in 1962, he made no mention of Stone, who had been his fair-haired boy for fifteen years. Stone’s parting shot, after Stern sold the newspaper, was to chide his one-time benefactor: “The *Post*’s baiting of reds and the Soviet Union was all the more offensive because of the liberal pretensions of the paper.” After leaving the *New York Post*, Stone became, in September 1939, a Washington-based associate editor at *The Nation* magazine, which then styled itself the bastion of “militant liberalism.” In December 1940, he also began writing for a new New York-based newspaper called *PM*. See “Stalin Takes Off His Mask,” *New York Post*, 15 February 1938, p. 1; I. F. Stone, “The New York *Post*’ Changes Hands,” *The Nation*, 1 July 1939, p. 4; Cottrell, *Izzy*, pp. 70–71; MacPherson, “*All Governments Lie*,” pp. 171–172; and J. David Stern, *Memoirs of a Maverick Publisher* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1962), pp. 245–247.

If this, in fact, was the case, it follows that Stone's cooperation with the Soviet state also contributed to his failure to foresee the Hitler-Stalin pact. Having cast his lot intellectually and politically and having committed an act in furtherance of what he believed, he was blinded to a reality that others, who considered themselves no less progressive, saw with increasing clarity as the decade ended: that Germany and the Soviet Union were both totalitarian dictatorships.

For many fellow travelers, either Spain or the Great Terror was sufficient to persuade them that there was not a thimble's worth of difference between Hitlerism and Stalinism after all. Both were totalitarian and repugnant. But Stone—unlike, say, George Orwell—preferred to ignore the Stalinist practices exported to Spain.<sup>113</sup> Although Stone did not, like many fellow travelers, turn a complete blind eye to Soviet “defects” or pretend that the Stalinist state was not a dictatorship, ultimately his faith in the Soviet experiment was not severely shaken—at least not yet.<sup>114</sup> “[T]hough still in many respects absolutist

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113. “The main issue was to fight fascism . . . Spain was a preview of it. Without the Popular Front, Spain would have gone under much earlier,” Stone told Todd Gitlin in 1985. “So we didn't have much patience for the POUM [Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista], the anarchists and the red hot anti-Communists.” See Stone, interview by Gitlin.

114. The *New York Post* published editorials criticizing “terror” in the Soviet Union as early as December 1934, even likening some of Moscow's tactics to those of the Nazi regime. Stalin's intolerance for dissent was also noted when a new round of purges occurred in 1937. Yet the *Post* also ran editorials that tended to play down the show trials. One 1937 editorial stated, “Perhaps, as Trotsky contends, Thermidor approaches in Russia. Perhaps, as Stalin contends, a vast counter-revolutionary conspiracy has been uncovered. We don't know.” Another editorial from June of that year claimed: “We have no reason to doubt the truth of the charges against the eight Soviet generals. . . . The character of [their] judges . . . makes it impossible to believe that the eight were framed.” That the truth could not be known was a familiar refrain on the left—and, if it was knowable, it should not be allowed to fracture the broad anti-fascist front. See “The Two-Edged Sword of Terror,” *New York Post*, 7 December 1934, p. 10; “?????” *New York Post*, 26 January 1937, p. 8; “Government by Purge,” *New York Post*, 9 February 1937, p. 8; “The Real Question behind the Russian Trials,” *New York Post*, 14 June 1937, p. 6; and William L. O'Neill, *A Better World, The Great Schism: Stalinism and the American Intellectuals* (New York: Touchstone, 1982), p. 13. Meanwhile, *The Nation*, Stone's other primary outlet, published a near-total apologetics, “refusing to use the trial as the enemies of the Soviet Union are using it—as a curtain which they draw down upon Russia's positive achievements in building a collective economy and a culture.” See “Behind the Soviet Trials,” *The Nation*, 6 February 1937, pp. 143–145. Nathaniel Weyl was the source of an interesting anecdote that reflected the depth of Stone's distress over the issue. In the summer of 1937, Stone approached Weyl, a secret Communist Party member who worked at the *New York Post*. After reading widely available trial transcripts, Weyl had concluded that the purge trials were “judicial murder,” but he still believed in the Popular Front against Hitlerism because Stalin's crimes were “seemingly directed against his own people.” Stone, too, had read the transcripts and found the official version difficult to believe; still, he wanted more information. Perhaps, he told Weyl, a more realistic explanation was reserved for “insiders”—namely, people in the international Communist movement as opposed to American Communists. Weyl arranged for Stone to meet a German anti-fascist, known to Weyl as Hans Schroeter, who was supposedly linked to the Comintern. Schroeter briefed Stone about the history of alleged collaboration between the German and Soviet military staffs—“inside” information that apparently satisfied Stone, at least to the point that he maintained his agnosticism and backed away from denouncing the purges. See “I. F. Stone Security Matter,” Office Memorandum by Guy Hottel, SAC, Washington Field Office, to Director, FBI, 15 November 1950, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act; Nathaniel Weyl, *Encounters with*

. . . [the USSR] is nevertheless the scene of the greatest social experiment of our time,” he wrote in November 1937.<sup>115</sup> Besides, the truly international threat to civilization and humanity was fascism, whereas Stalin’s excesses were (mostly) confined to the Soviet Union. Stone’s internalized beliefs were much more powerful than any that could be imposed from the outside, unaffected as they were by any first-hand exposure to the momentous events he was writing about. Self-deception made him believe the lie, to borrow a phrase from a 1937 Rodgers and Hart lyric.<sup>116</sup>

Consequently, even though a reporter like Orwell saw Spain as signaling the death knell for the Popular Front, making it neither desirable nor truly possible, for Stone the rational lesson was that the Popular Front had to be maintained no matter what the cost. The Spanish Civil War, he feared, pre-figured the outcome of the world war that was sure to come. “Progressives and radicals of all shades and varieties have learned not to allow the red-baiters to split their forces at home,” Stone wrote in November 1937. “The experience of the Spanish republic shows that when the time comes there will be only one place to which anti-fascists can look for aid in the event that they must fight for their liberties and their lives. I shall not mention the bogeyman by name.”<sup>117</sup> He conceded that Stalin’s dictatorship was a distortion of socialism, but it was still socialist.<sup>118</sup> As biographer Cottrell writes, “in spite of [Stone’s] considerable qualms about Stalinist practices, Soviet Russia remained for him what it was for so many, ‘ultimately not a country but a state of mind,’” as Stone himself wrote in a letter to *Nation* editor Freda Kirchwey in 1939.<sup>119</sup> That state of mind required a state of denial, which had been reinforced by a secret commitment.

For left-wingers, the climactic geopolitical and ideological moment of the 1930s was the Nazi-Soviet pact, an event as “stunning and consequential” as Pearl Harbor was two years later.<sup>120</sup> No one forgot where he was or what he was doing the moment the news came. Because of Stone’s genuine, blind faith in a united left, he probably would have signed the 10 August 1939 statement denouncing the newly formed Committee for Cultural Freedom (CCF) even if he had never entered into a covert relationship with Soviet intelligence. The CCF’s founding manifesto, published in late May, had lumped together the

*Communism* (Philadelphia, PA: Xlibris, 2003), pp. 38–40; Cottrell, *Izzy*, pp. 67–68, 77; Guttenplan, *American Radical*, pp. 107–108; and Stone, “1937 Is Not 1914,” p. 496.

115. Stone, “1937 Is Not 1914,” p. 496.

116. Lance Morrow, “Alger, ‘Ales’ and Joe,” *Time*, 7 June 1999, p. 66.

117. Stone, “1937 Is Not 1914,” p. 497.

118. Cottrell, *Izzy*, p. 67.

119. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

120. Rovere, *Final Reports*, p. 59.

Soviet Union and Nazi Germany as totalitarian threats to civilized values.<sup>121</sup> But if Stone entertained any doubts about chastising the CCF for supposedly aiding “fascists and their allies,” his earlier covert role likely overcame whatever reluctance he had—that and his motive for cooperating in the first place, his yearning to see “Russia in alliance with the West.”<sup>122</sup>

The 10 August letter was so philo-Stalinist that even a majority of *The Nation's* editorial staff could not bring themselves to sign it, although the magazine was a steadfast champion of the Popular Front. Only one other *Nation* staffer, associate editor Maxwell Stewart, put his name on the slavishly apologetic open letter, which was signed by more than 400 leftists.<sup>123</sup> Four days after the declaration was issued the Soviet Union and Germany announced their “nonaggression” and trade-expansion pact, shattering the dream of a Popular Front and throwing the American left into disarray.<sup>124</sup> Distrust of Stalin did not abate even when the Soviet Union became a wartime ally.

The evidence about Stone’s KGB involvement puts a slightly different cast on some old observations. Richard Rovere, a Communist and member of *New Masses’* editorial staff until the late summer of 1939, when he quit over the Nazi-Soviet pact, later recalled that among those who had failed to see the treaty coming, no one was “more outraged by the outrageous” document or “more indignant about that pact” than I. F. Stone.<sup>125</sup> In mid-October 1939, Stone wrote a pair of letters to one of his closest friends, Michael Blankfort.<sup>126</sup>

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121. Letter to the Editor, *The Nation*, 27 May 1939, p. 626; Freda Kirchwey, “Red Totalitarianism,” *The Nation*, 27 May 1939, p. 605–606; Letter to the Editor (“Red Totalitarianism,” Reply), *The Nation*, 17 June 1939, p. 710; Letter to the Editor (“And Rebuttal”), *The Nation*, 17 June 1939, p. 711; and Letter to the Editor, *The Nation*, 26 August 1939, p. 228. The 10 August letter signed by Stone appeared in the 26 August issue of *The Nation* and notoriously stated that the CCF “encouraged the fantastic falsehood that the USSR and the totalitarian states are basically alike. . . . The Soviet Union considers political dictatorship a transitional form and has shown a steadily expanding democracy in every sphere.” Although *Nation* editor Freda Kirchwey sympathized with the CCF critics, she was not a signatory of the letter, which she believed was too categorical in its “uncritical approval” of the Soviet Union. In the magazine’s next issue, she wrote, “[T]oday we wonder how many of the 400 would have signed could they have foreseen what was to come.” Alpern, *Kirchwey*, pp. 125–126; and “The Shape of Things,” *The Nation*, 2 September 1939, p. 231.

122. Cottrell, *Izzy*, p. 76.

123. *Ibid.*; and O’Neill, *A Better World*, pp. 13–17.

124. James Wechsler, “Stalin and Union Square,” *The Nation*, 30 September 1939, pp. 342–345.

125. Philip Nobile, *Intellectual Skywriting: Literary Politics & The New York Review of Books* (New York: Charterhouse, 1974), p. 144; Cottrell, *Izzy*, p. 77. But in 1948, when the State Department published a volume about the pact based on captured German documents, Stone was not so outraged. He argued that the pact resulted from “hard-boiled politics,” and he was much more concerned about the supposedly cynical purpose behind publication of the volume. Moscow’s dealings were indeed morally reprehensible, but the volume was part of a propaganda campaign to “build up fear and hatred” of the Soviet Union and prove it was an “international monster.” See I. F. Stone, “Toward World War III,” *The Nation*, 7 February 1948, pp. 146–148.

126. Cottrell, *Izzy*, p. 69.

Discussing the pact and the war that had broken out, Stone expressed disgust at the ease with which CPUSA members had flip-flopped, along with *Pravda* editorials that blamed the war on Poland and *Izvestiya's* new position that one's attitude toward Nazism was really, after all, a matter of taste, not principle. "I'm off the Moscow axis," Stone declared to Blankfort.<sup>127</sup> When Blankfort wrote back suggesting that Stone felt personally betrayed, Stone at first took umbrage, calling the notion absurd, but then admitted an element of betrayal. However, he had "recovered—but no more fellow traveling."<sup>128</sup> The real issue, of course, was not that Communism had betrayed Stone, but that he had failed to see it for what it always had been and always would be.<sup>129</sup>

Stone, while not advocating direct entry into the conflict, soon became one of the most prominent "imperialist war-mongers" on *The Nation*, a magazine now denounced by the CPUSA as one of the primary "idealistic whitewashers of the imperialist war."<sup>130</sup> After the fall of France in June 1940, Stone turned his investigative prowess to deficiencies in the U.S. industrial base and war production.<sup>131</sup> Stone's series of articles about military preparedness was published in August 1941 as his second book, *Business as Usual*.<sup>132</sup> The timing proved once again that Stone's main vice—his independence of thought—could easily put him out of step with the Communist Party on pivotal issues.

## The Late 1960s

The alleged relationship that has, until now, generated the most ink was the one that ostensibly occurred from 1966 to 1968, when Stone was in contact with Oleg Kalugin. It is not hard to see why. In addition to coming from a live person rather than some dry and disputed documents, the relationship occurred during what is now recognizable as Stone's iconic period, the one that defines him. Accepting the worst interpretation proffered by Kalugin would be tantamount to destroying Stone's reputation. Compared to any earlier relationships, however, Stone's involvement with Kalugin was apparently considerable ado about not too much. The ink spilled over their relationship was out of proportion to its actual significance.

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127. Ibid.

128. Ibid.

129. Rovere, *Final Reports*, p. 67.

130. Cottrell, *Izzy*, p. 89. *PM* was, if anything, even more interventionist than *The Nation*.

131. Cottrell, *Izzy*, p. 92.

132. I. F. Stone, *Business as Usual: The First Year of Defense* (New York: Modern Age Books, 1941).



By the mid-1960s Stone had perfected his modus operandi of finding stories in overlooked public documents such as congressional hearings and reports and probably had less access than ever to internal discussions—certainly nothing like the access he enjoyed during the New Deal years and World War II, when his exposés of the defense industry had opened many doors.<sup>133</sup> What information he chose to share with a KGB officer while they lunched at Harvey's in 1966 stemmed primarily from his accumulated knowledge after covering Washington for more than a quarter-century. Still, any assessments from such an informed, astute, and veteran observer were not insignificant.

Although Kalugin, in one of his iterations, claimed that Stone was enlisted to spread disinformation, a close reading of the *Weekly*s published from 1966 to 1968 shows no evidence that Stone put out stories that have since been identified as KGB-originated disinformation. If Stone had been an agent of influence during this period, akin to Carl Marzani or M. S. Arnoni, he almost certainly would have been in the thick of peddling conspiracy theories about FBI and CIA involvement in the assassinations of the 1960s, particularly the 1963 murder of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas. Exploitation of the assassinations was a recurrent theme of Soviet propaganda and KGB disinformation during this period because nothing was more likely to impugn and sow distrust of the U.S. security services than insinuating that one or both had played a role in these political murders.<sup>134</sup> Notably, both Marzani and Arnoni were instrumental in this effort.<sup>135</sup>

For a fleeting moment—one item in one issue—the *Weekly* helped propagate the rumor that Oswald may have been an FBI informant.<sup>136</sup> But subsequently, and in sharp contrast to Marzani, Arnoni, and other prominent left-wing publications like the *National Guardian*, Stone staunchly defended the

133. Cottrell, *Izzy*, p. 103.

134. On the Soviet Union's overt and covert propaganda about the assassination of John F. Kennedy, see Armand Moss, *Disinformation, Misinformation, and the "Conspiracy" to Kill JFK Exposed* (Hamden, CT: Archon Book, 1987). The most spectacularly successful disinformation effort with respect to the Kennedy assassination occurred when New Orleans district attorney Jim Garrison fell for the Communist-perpetrated fiction that businessman Clay Shaw was affiliated with the CIA, a falsehood that filmmaker Oliver Stone (no relation to I. F. Stone) incorporated in his 1991 blockbuster *JFK*. See Max Holland, "The Power of Disinformation: The Lie That Linked CIA to the Kennedy Assassination," *Studies in Intelligence*, No. 11 (Fall–Winter 2001), pp. 5–17.

135. Marzani's KGB-subsidized publishing house, Marzani and Munsell, had published the first book about the Kennedy assassination in the United States. The book depicted the accused assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, as "an FBI agent provocateur with a CIA background"—a charge that dovetailed with overt Soviet propaganda. Joachim Joesten, *Oswald: Assassin or Fall Guy?* (New York: Marzani and Munsell, 1964), pp. 119, 149–150. Arnoni, for his part, published a blistering attack on the Warren Commission report when it was published in September 1964, and for years afterward consistently published articles that attempted to cast doubt on the Warren Commission's integrity and probity, thus contributing to the stunning turnabout in the panel's reputation by 1967.

136. I. F. Stone, "Dallas Police Wonder Whether Oswald Was an FBI Informer, Houston (Tex.) Paper Reports," *Weekly*, 27 January 1964, p. 1.

Warren Commission and its findings. The first paragraph of Stone's October 1964 review of the commission's report was prophetic, foreseeing as it did the distrust that mostly left-wing critics would be responsible for stoking, as the paranoid style became a province of the American left for the next four decades. Stone wrote:

All my adult life as a newspaperman I have been fighting in defense of the Left and of a sane politics, against conspiracy theories of history, character assassination, guilt by association and demonology. Now I see elements of the Left using these same tactics in the controversy over the Kennedy assassination and the Warren Commission Report. I believe the Commission has done a first-rate job, on a level that does our country proud and is worthy of so tragic an event. . . .

It is one thing to analyze discrepancies. It is quite another to write and speak in just that hysterical and defamatory way from which the Left has suffered in the last quarter century or more of political controversy.<sup>137</sup>

Stone went on to single out Carl Marzani's book, written by Joachim Joesten, for particular scorn. Joesten's charges are as "sloppy as they are wild . . . [they are] dishonorable and dissolve the fabric of society." The book is "rubbish," Stone insisted, and "Carl Marzani—whom I have defended against loose charges in the worst days of the witch hunt—ought to have had more sense of public responsibility than to publish it."<sup>138</sup>

Stone's unyielding defense of the U.S. government invited scorn and derision from the left, particularly from Arnoni and the *National Guardian*.<sup>139</sup> Stone was attacked for his naïveté, and many readers expressed disappointment that Stone refused to investigate the assassination with his customary zeal. Stone's October 1964 article on the commission's report and his stubborn refusal thereafter to revisit the issue enraged as many of his readers as anything he ever wrote.<sup>140</sup>

The point here is not so much Stone's position on one issue, however, as much as his clear-cut independence from the line being propagated by known agents of influence in the 1960s. This is not to say that many of Stone's articles were uncongenial to the Soviet line on such topics as the CIA, the FBI, the war in Vietnam, or U.S. policy toward the Third World in general. Yet

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137. I. F. Stone, "The Left and the Warren Commission Report," *Weekly*, 5 October 1964, pp. 1–3.

138. Ibid. Stone's first article on the government's case against Marzani, which he attributed solely to "anti-red hysteria," appeared in 1947. See I. F. Stone, "A New Weapon for Witch-Hunters," *The Nation*, 12 July 1947, pp. 33–35. See also I. F. Stone, "The Unresolved Marzani Case," *The Nation*, 8 January 1949, pp. 26–38.

139. Arnoni wrote, "Mr. Stone's October 5th newsletter was his annual petition for political acceptability." M. S. Arnoni, "A Commentator Fights a Reporter," *The Minority of One*, November 1964, p. 5.

140. Peter B. Flint, "I. F. Stone, Iconoclast of Journalism, Is Dead at 81," *The New York Times*, 19 June 1989, p. D13; and MacPherson, *All Governments Lie*, p. 390.

with respect to these issues, what Stone published in the *Weekly* and elsewhere from 1966 to 1968 was indistinguishable from positions he had taken during the late 1950s and early 1960s, when, by every account, he had *no* relationship with the Soviet intelligence.

It is understandable that a KGB officer might want to claim the prized re-recruitment of I. F. Stone, given the renown and influence Stone had achieved by the mid-1960s because of his prescient criticism of U.S. policy in Vietnam. It is also not inconceivable that Kalugin directed Stone's attention to an overlooked statement from a Communist leader that Stone might have found worthy of mention in the *Weekly*. Then Kalugin could semi-legitimately claim to his superiors that Stone, in addition to being a source of intelligence information, was also a confidential contact by virtue of his interest in or willingness to incorporate Kalugin's ideas.<sup>141</sup> Yet, to paraphrase Kalugin's initial observation to Herbert Romerstein, every indication is that Stone would have broadly written the same articles regardless of whether Kalugin was buying him lunch at Harvey's.

## The Early Cold War

The truly unknown period consists of the years from 1944 to 1956. Vassiliev had little access to KGB archives from the mid-1940s onward, and the Venona intercepts prove only that Stone was approached in October 1944, not that he was re-recruited. One of the few constants in Kalugin's iterations, however, is that when he was instructed to reach out to Stone the American journalist had not had any contact with the KGB since 1956. The significance of that year, both in world history and in Stone's life, suggests that Kalugin's recollection must be taken seriously.

From 1944 to early 1946, as the wartime alliance between Washington and Moscow fractured, Stone's articles about Soviet aims evinced a surprising naïveté for someone who had been sorely embarrassed by the cynicism of Stalin's rule. One egregious example involved sixteen members of the non-Communist Polish Armia Krajowa (AK, or Home Army) who were loyal to the government-in-exile in London rather than to the Lublin government created by Moscow.

In March 1945, just after the Yalta conference ended, the Soviet military

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141. The columnist William Safire once quoted a CIA officer to the effect that "when a KGB man found a source, even one that took no money and would have been furious to be considered helpful to a foreign power, he would claim to have developed an *agent of influence*. It made the KGB man look good in his reports, as if he had half-recruited a well-placed American." William Safire, "On Language," *The New York Times Magazine*, 27 September 1992, p. 20.

counterintelligence (SMERSH) representative in Poland, Ivan Serov, reported to Stalin that the Polish Communists wanted him to rid them of Stanisław Mikołajczyk, the leader of the government-in-exile.<sup>142</sup> Instead, Stalin authorized Serov, a notorious henchman and future KGB chief, to arrest sixteen AK leaders.<sup>143</sup> They were lured out of their hiding on the pretext that Serov wanted to talk to them about the composition of a provisional government and that their personal safety would be guaranteed. When they emerged they were promptly arrested by SMERSH agents and spirited to Moscow. For weeks the Soviet government denied any knowledge of their whereabouts until, under pressure from the British and U.S. governments, Moscow disclosed that it had custody of the sixteen Poles—whereupon they were charged with terrorism, espionage, and sabotage behind Soviet lines. Stalin was particularly displeased that President Truman had joined British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in protesting the Soviet Union's heavy-handed action, although that did not stop SMERSH from making further arrests. By late 1945, 20,000 Polish citizens deemed politically unreliable were imprisoned in Soviet camps.<sup>144</sup>

In May 1945, Stone was covering the organizing conference of the UN in San Francisco for *The Nation* when Moscow finally admitted to having custody of the AK members. Stone fully understood that the so-called Polish problem was the first postwar challenge to the unity of the Big Three.<sup>145</sup> Rather than express concern over Stalin's apparent determination to subjugate Poland, Stone fixated on the U.S. State Department's exploitation of the issue.<sup>146</sup> The State Department's handling of Moscow's admission, and the conduct of the U.S. delegation at San Francisco in general, were firm evidence of

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142. SMERSH was an acronym for *Smert' Shpionam* ("Death to Spies!"), a military counterintelligence agency that had as its primary mission the hunting down of traitors and collaborators.

143. Among other tasks, Ivan Serov supervised the 1940 massacre of 22,000 Polish prisoners in the Katyn forest and the cities of Kharkiv and Tver and oversaw the deportation to the gulag of more than 1.5 million "anti-Soviet elements" from the East European territories occupied from 1939 to 1941. He became KGB chief in 1954 and as such masterminded the covert measures that helped crush the 1956 Hungarian revolt. See Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), p. 353; and "Dropping the Cop," *Time*, 22 December 1958, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,937694,00.html>.

144. Sydney Gruson, "British Gloomy over the Arrests," *The New York Times*, 6 May 1945, p. 28; Herbert Feis, *Between War and Peace: The Potsdam Conference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 37; Zubok, *Failed Empire*, p. 23; and Gerhard Wettig, *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe: The Emergence and Development of East-West Conflict, 1939–1953* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), p. 48. Three of the men died in Soviet prisons while serving 5- to 10-year sentences. Three others were not imprisoned, and the rest served out shorter sentences.

145. I. F. Stone, *The Truman Era* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1953), p. 9.

146. Stalin, according to Gerhard Wettig, expected his policy to create major tensions with Britain and the United States but was willing to pay the price because Soviet hegemony in Poland was deemed crucial. See Wettig, *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe*, p. 46.

a growing effort to organize “an anti-Soviet bloc under [American] leadership,” Stone asserted. He added:

I do not know the full facts about the arrest of sixteen Polish leaders in Poland, but I know enough to advise American progressives to keep their shirts on. . . . The way in which the news of the Polish arrests was given out to the press by [Secretary of State Edward] Stettinius, and the timing, lead one to suspect that some people may have deliberately sought to torpedo a Polish settlement just as one was in prospect.

. . . One wonders why, in fairness to the Russians, they were not included in the Stettinius press release, which created the impression that the arrests were wholly arbitrary and the charges significantly vague. One wonders about another point in the Stettinius release. It referred to those arrested as “prominent Polish democratic leaders.” Abe Penzik, press representative of the [Communist] Lublin government, said at the press conference that two of the sixteen . . . were anti-Semites and fascists. . . .

. . . I advise suspension of judgment until we learn more about the circumstances. In the light of what is known . . . it would be very unwise to assume, as so many newspapers do, that the arrests must have been arbitrary, unjust, and another example of Soviet high-handedness. This is exactly the position into which the anti-Soviet press is trying to stampede public opinion.<sup>147</sup>

Writing in *PM*, his other outlet, Stone put forth a similar analysis:

Marshal [*sic*] Stalin’s categorical denial that the 16 arrested men had been “invited” to negotiate is regarded here as very significant. An invitation would imply a safe conduct and raise serious moral questions. But up to now, neither on nor off the record, has the press been told by U.S. or British officials that there was an invitation. That had come only from the Polish Exile Government and that now is denied by Stalin.

It would be unjust to assume in advance that all the 16 are guilty of diversionist activities behind Red Army lines. But it certainly would be foolhardy to assume that no such activities were carried on in Poland.<sup>148</sup>

Such articles, despite being inaccurate and biased, prove nothing concrete except that while basking in the glow of the Allied victory over Germany, Stone was writing like a fellow traveler again.<sup>149</sup> He made no pretense of dis-

147. I. F. Stone, “Anti-Russian Undertow,” *The Nation*, 12 May 1945, pp. 534–535. Two months earlier, Stone had criticized Senator Arthur Vandenberg, an influential Republican on foreign policy, for “encouraging Polish intransigence” and had accused the “Copperhead [right-wing] press” of “weeping crocodile tears over ‘poor Poland.’” I. F. Stone, “Senatorial Trouble-Maker,” *The Nation*, 17 March 1945, pp. 292–293.

148. I. F. Stone, “Anders’ Army May Be Big Bar to Polish Settlement,” *PM*, 21 May 1945, p. 12.

149. Stone also praised the Yalta agreement as Roosevelt’s greatest achievement rather than viewing it as a concession to Soviet power in Central Europe. Stone inadvertently gave conservatives ammuni-

guising the fact that he was “friendly toward the Soviet point of view on Poland,” as he put it in one of his articles for *PM*.<sup>150</sup>

During this period Stone’s articles came under some of the first sustained criticism that had ever been leveled against his work. A telling critique was delivered by Louis Fischer, though his was not the only one.<sup>151</sup> One of the few staff members of *The Nation* with actual exposure to existing Soviet socialism—having spent fourteen years there as a correspondent in the 1920s and 1930s—Fischer ended his 22-year association with the magazine in June 1945 because of what he called its “misleading” coverage of current events. *The Nation* “had become very much like a party organ,” observed Fischer. “Its opinions appear to be determined by loyalties to organized groups and to governments rather than to principle.”<sup>152</sup> Fischer’s highly publicized resignation was all the more striking because it came just a month after the war in the European theater had ended. In addition, Fischer, like Stone, had been an adamant Popular Fronter in the 1930s, unmoved by either the Spanish Civil War (which he had actually covered) or the Moscow purge trials.<sup>153</sup> But, unlike Stone, Fischer had never been able to see the Soviet Union in the same light again after the Nazi-Soviet pact.<sup>154</sup>

tion when he wrote, “One can easily imagine Governor Dewey doing many of the same things . . . as Mr. Roosevelt since the election, but one cannot image a Republican president reaching the Crimea agreement on Poland.” I. F. Stone, “This Is What We Voted For,” *The Nation*, 17 February 1945, pp. 174–175. On domestic issues, which Stone wrote about in equal measure, his position in 1945–1946 was actually to the left of what would be called “Browderism,” after Earl Browder, the CPUSA secretary who dissolved the party—temporarily, as it turned out.

150. I. F. Stone, “London Poles Fight to Retain Old Order, Stone Says . . .,” *PM*, 14 May 1945, pp. 4–5.

151. In the summer of 1946, the anti-Communist *Partisan Review* ran a scathing article that attacked Stone outright as an apologist for “the Socialist Fatherland.” See “An Editorial: The ‘Liberal’ Fifth Column,” *Partisan Review*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Summer 1946), reprinted in Edith Kurzweil, ed., *A Partisan Century: Political Writings from Partisan Review* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 69–82; and Cottrell, *Izzy*, p. 129. That same summer, a controversy arose at Stone’s other main outlet, *PM*, which had long been riven by disputes between its anti-Communist wing and fellow travelers. When budget woes forced a retrenchment, publisher Ralph Ingersoll told Washington bureau chief James Wechsler he needed to cut at least three of the eight staffers in the bureau. Wechsler felt that economic distress was being invoked to dismiss anti-Communists unfairly, and he resigned in June 1946, along with three other staffers, after issuing a public blast. Wechsler charged that Ingersoll had “destroyed the confidence of those who believe that *PM* should be as realistic and critical in its coverage and examination of Russian foreign policy as in its evaluation of the foreign policy of our own government.” Wechsler’s remark was clearly aimed at Stone and Alex Uhl, two staffers in the Washington bureau whom Wechsler saw as lined up with the newspaper’s Communist faction. See “Five Quit *PM* Saying Reds Sway Editor,” *The New York Times*, 15 June 1946, p. 22; Wechsler, *Age of Suspicion*, pp. 198–202; Roy Hoopes, *Ralph Ingersoll: A Biography* (New York: Atheneum, 1985), pp. 318–321; Cottrell, *Izzy*, p. 138; and MacPherson, “*All Governments Lie*,” p. 208.

152. Alpern, *Kirchwey*, p. 163. Fischer went on to become George Kennan’s research associate at the Institute for Advanced Study and, later, a lecturer on the Soviet Union at Princeton University.

153. Cottrell, *Izzy*, p. 65

154. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

In the mid-1940s, of course, the geopolitical context for cooperating with Soviet intelligence agencies was changing dramatically: it would no longer be a multipolar, multi-ideological world in which one might rationalize the Soviet Union as an inevitable U.S. ally in the face of a clear and overarching danger. The FBI's attention would no longer be split between right-wing and left-wing threats to internal security and could focus exclusively on the latter. Both these realities probably militated against the kind of relationship that existed earlier, whereby Stone engaged in talent-spotting and conveying messages. Then, too, Stone may have considered such mundane tasks now to be beneath his station or not worth his time. He had steadily built on his prescient coverage of war production issues to achieve a degree of respectability and prominence he did not have in the 1930s. By the same token, it does not seem plausible that Soviet intelligence would want to cultivate Stone for menial operational tasks, no matter how necessary.

If a relationship existed in the mid-1940s, however, it was again bound to be short-lived. The defection of Elizabeth Bentley in November 1945 precipitated another dramatic rollback in Soviet networks and the recall of Soviet officers. Essentially overnight, all Soviet intelligence activity in the United States came to a dead stop.<sup>155</sup> About a year later, just as the chill in Soviet-American relations was appearing immutable, but well before Bentley's revelations about spy rings in Washington spilled out in public in July 1948, Stone wrote a prophetic article for *PM* that took a dim view of Communist underground activity and emphasized its political risks, particularly the repercussions once such activities became known in the target country. The article ran in February 1947, a month before Truman issued an executive order establishing a loyalty program within the federal government—an indicator of just how politically sensitive the issue had become following the 1946 election.

[T]he conspiratorial habits of a petty handful of Communists may soon provide excuse and occasion for a repetition, on a far more dangerous scale, of the Red scare that followed the last war. It would be better for all concerned if the Communists came fully into the open, ended all the penny dreadful hole-in-the-wall, playing at revolution. . . .

No politically sophisticated person believes that the Comintern has been abolished in more than name. The Russians cannot have the cake of conspiracy and the penny of cooperation at the same time. That is an issue the Kremlin must face . . .<sup>156</sup>

155. Weinstein and Vassiliev, *The Haunted Wood*, p. 106.

156. I. F. Stone, "The Eisler Affair as Spectacle and Warning," *PM*, 9 February 1947, p. 5. See also Cottrell, *Jizzy*, p. 135.

This suggests that Stone either had rebuffed Pravdin's overture in October 1944 or had ceased being involved not long after it was made.<sup>157</sup> In the late 1940s, moreover, Stone was moving toward a pox-on-both-your-houses approach to the Cold War and could rightly claim by 1949 that according to Washington's standards, he was "a dirty red." But 225 miles to the north, in New York's Union Square, he was classified as "a dirty counter revolutionary."<sup>158</sup>

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157. The FBI launched a security investigation of Stone in early 1951, several months before he returned to the United States from a 10-month sojourn abroad. The intense investigation lasted for approximately three years and at times included physical surveillance, a mail cover, wiretap, and review of his income tax returns. The investigation failed to establish any more facts connecting Stone to the "Blin" mentioned in the 1944 Venona decrypts and did not confirm that Stone was "presently active in Soviet espionage work." Accordingly, Stone was deleted from the bureau's Security Index in 1955. During the investigation, however, the FBI did learn that in 1946 and 1947, according to a "confidential informant," Stone "maintained a close relationship with M. S. Vavilov, who was then serving as the first secretary of the Soviet embassy in Washington." The same FBI report from June 1951 also noted that Stone was acquainted with three other Soviet diplomats around this time, including Yu. M. Bruslov, a second secretary at the embassy. These contacts with credentialed diplomats may have been innocuous and overt, but the Vassiliev notebooks reveal that Mikhail S. Vavilov was a KGB "co-optee" carrying out tasks on behalf of the KGB in the late 1940s under the cover name "Oleg." (In the aftermath of the Gouzenko affair and Elizabeth Bentley's defection from Soviet ranks in 1945, many KGB officers had to be withdrawn from the *rezidenturas* in New York and Washington. To compensate for the shortfall in manpower, many diplomats were drafted to carry out operational tasks that simply could not be postponed. Hence the term "co-optee" entered the KGB lexicon, although these draftees truly were members of the Soviet diplomatic corps. Vavilov is one of the most frequent co-optees to appear in the Vassiliev notebooks.) In addition, according to the Vassiliev notebooks, second secretary Yuri M. Bruslov was a KGB officer outright who worked in the Line PR section and used the cover name "Pavel." See Guttenplan, *American Radical*, pp. 272–275; "Isidor Feinstein Stone," Washington Field Office Report, File No. 100-22286, 13 June 1951, released under the Freedom of Information Act; "Plan of measures regarding connections with agents (March 1949), Station staff (polit. Line)," KGB File 43173, v. 2c, p. 18, in Vassiliev, *Black Notebook*, p. 74; and Haynes, Klehr, and Vassiliev, *Spies*, pp. 282, 622.

158. I. F. Stone, "Me and Marxism: Invitation—to a Dog-Fight," *Daily Compass*, 14 November 1949, p. 5; and Cottrell, *Izzy*, p. 158. Domestically, the 1948 indictment of twelve Communist leaders under the Smith Act reopened a bitter divide between Stone and the CPUSA. Stone could not resist reminding party members about their loud defense of the first Smith Act indictments handed down in 1940, when members of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), a Trotskyist offshoot, were the targets. "Communists are as hysterical about Trotskyites as Red-baiters are about Communists," Stone wrote. See I. F. Stone, "The G-String Conspiracy," *The Nation*, 26 July 1941, pp. 66–67; and I. F. Stone, "The Communists and Civil Liberty," *Daily Compass*, 1 July 1949, p. 5. In the midst of the Communists' 1949 trial in New York, Stone encountered George Charney, one of the defendants, and V. J. Jerome, the party's chief cultural commissar. Jerome asked Stone about what suggestions he had about mustering non-Communists' support, whereupon Stone quietly "reminded [Jerome] of [the Communists'] arrogant, derogatory attitudes over the years toward liberals, even those of Marxist sympathies." Coming from a journalist who was defending the Communists' civil liberties at every turn, it was (in Charney's words) a "devastating" reminder of the bitterness and suspicion in left-wing ranks. Nonetheless, as of early 1950 Stone was still arguing in favor of a Popular Front–like stance (via the Progressive Party) that did not exclude Communists. See George Charney, *A Long Journey* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), pp. 223–224; and I. F. Stone, "What of the Communists in the Progressive Party?" in *The Truman Era* (New York: Random House, 1972), pp. 159–163 (originally published in *The Daily Compass*, 28 February 1950). Stone's heresies also extended to Soviet policy by the late 1940s. Although Stone never disowned his early approval of Moscow's hegemony in Eastern Europe,



Yet if Kalugin's claim that Stone cut off all contact in 1956 has any credence, a relationship had to have been reestablished before then. The most plausible period is the mid-1950s, well after the outbreak of the Korean war in June 1950, when McCarthyism was in full bloom and the espionage case against Julius and Ethel Rosenberg seemed to explain why the United States had lost its nuclear weapons monopoly. Taken together, these events meant that Stone's worst fears had come to pass: a direct clash of arms between the forces of socialism and the United States, along with a domestic Red Scare as virulent as anything he had been warning about for years. The "panic [was] on," wrote Stone, and the United States was headed toward "fascism and folly."<sup>159</sup>

In considering this period in Stone's life, it is impossible not to examine the circumstances surrounding the writing and May 1952 publication of *The Hidden History of the Korean War*, the most controversial work he ever produced. The new information in Vassiliev's notebooks raises again the question of whether there was some link between *The Hidden History* and the KGB—that is, whether Stone's conspiratorial rendering of the Korean War's origins was an example of Soviet disinformation, as has been alleged by Stone's worst critics in the past.<sup>160</sup>

which he argued was needed to clear out the clerical and reactionary detritus of the prewar regimes there, he became openly critical of Soviet rule when a Popular Front-style government in Czechoslovakia was toppled in a coup d'état in February 1948. Stone also criticized Moscow for compelling its satellites to reject the Marshall Plan (which he generally supported) and angrily denounced the Soviet blockade of Berlin when it was imposed in the summer of 1948. The latter moved Stone to rail against both superpowers for their "arrogance . . . egotism and . . . boundless fears." Perhaps Stone's greatest heresy was his support for Josip Broz Tito after Stalin excommunicated Yugoslavia from the Soviet bloc in 1948. See Cottrell, *Izzy*, pp. 140–141, 154–155; I. F. Stone, "What Is Really Going On behind the Iron Curtain?" in *The Truman Era*, pp. 32–35 (originally published in *PM*, 23 November 1947); I. F. Stone, "ERP Goes to Congress," *The Nation*, 27 December 1947, pp. 696–697; I. F. Stone, "The Wallace Plan and the Communists," *PM*, 2 January 1948, p. 10; and I. F. Stone, "Washington Perspective," *New York Star*, 30 June 1948, p. 8. Despite Stone's later even-handedness, he still tended to place the onus for the Cold War on Washington. In 1947, he asserted that the Truman Doctrine turned the United States into "the citadel of world reaction." The Marshall Plan, despite being a magnanimous act without precedent, was unlikely to succeed amidst "an anti-Soviet crusade, which discourages good trade or other relations with the Soviet bloc"; that promised to be its "fatal contradiction." He denounced the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1949 and, in general, persisted in believing that Soviet-style socialism was a progressive force lined up on the right side of history. See Cottrell, *Izzy*, pp. 130, 160; Stone, "ERP Goes to Congress," pp. 696–697; and I. F. Stone, "Cold War: How It Started, Where It Leads," *Sunday Compass*, 14 August 1949, pp. S3–S4.

159. I. F. Stone, "Shouting into a Hurricane," *Sunday Compass*, 13 August 1950, p. 12; I. F. Stone, "Looking at America from 3,000 Miles," *Sunday Compass*, 1 October 1950, p. 5; and Cottrell, *Izzy*, p. 164.

160. Romerstein and Breindel, *VENONA Secrets*, p. 435. Prior to Stone's book, the only publications that posited an alternative explanation for the war were Communist organs. In the United States, the New York-based *Daily Worker* and its West Coast affiliate, *People's World*, asserted that the "U.S. military and diplomatic establishments" started the war. "The Worker, parroting broadcasts from Moscow, blandly stated that the South Koreans had done the attacking instead of the other way around, with the headline RIGHTIST ATTACK REPELLED IN KOREA." "Drawing the Line," *Time*, 10 July 1950, available on-line at: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,805480,00.html>.

In mid-August 1950, Stone left the United States for ten months, his longest sojourn abroad. For a time, he even contemplated going into self-imposed exile.<sup>161</sup> Based in Paris as of mid-November, he was on roving assignment for *The Daily Compass*, a tabloid fashioned after the *New York Star*, the direct successor to *PM*, which had folded in June 1948.<sup>162</sup> Initially, Stone had accepted the standard explanation of how the Korean War started in June 1950: an invasion from the North, undertaken with the full complicity of the Soviet Union. (For his candor Stone was accused of “slimy Titoism” by the Communist press.)<sup>163</sup> Stone had even endorsed Truman’s plea to Moscow for help in arranging an immediate ceasefire.<sup>164</sup> But, in Paris, as he read coverage of the war in the French and British press in the fall of 1950 and compared that with accounts in U.S. newspapers based on official communiqués, he found what he believed were glaring discrepancies. With his investigative instincts aroused, Stone in mid-February 1951 began writing a series of articles from Paris about the war for *The Daily Compass* and *L’observateur*, a new left-wing but non-Communist French weekly.<sup>165</sup>

Stone’s articles caused a stir among the left-wing European intelligentsia. As he delved deeper, he came to believe that sinister forces in the United States were possibly responsible for provoking the war and certainly culpable for needlessly prolonging it.<sup>166</sup> Stone’s thesis was that rather than Stalin’s blun-

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161. An acquaintance of Stone wrote in late 1950, “I saw I. F. Stone in Belgrade. He is bringing his wife and children over to England and hoping to settle here permanently. He says he can’t stand America any longer—it’s impossible to be a journalist and to keep sane and honest, so he’s becoming a political refugee.” See Cedric Belfrage and James Aronson, *Something to Guard: The Stormy Life of the National Guardian, 1948–1967* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 93. See also MacPherson, “All Governments Lie,” pp. 274–276.

162. *PM*, which ceased publishing in June 1948 with a circulation of about 100,000, was immediately reborn under new management as the *New York Star*, a morning daily. The *Star* lasted only until January 1949 despite raising circulation to about 140,000. Five months later, a new publisher purchased the *Star*’s plant and founded *The Daily Compass*, a tabloid that published until November 1952; its circulation was notably smaller, only 30,000 at the time of its demise. See “*Star*, Daily, Quits for Lack of Funds,” *The New York Times*, 28 January 1949, p. 23; and “*The Daily Compass* Ends Publication,” *The New York Times*, 4 November 1952, p. 37.

163. “Drawing the Line,” *Time*, 10 July 1950, p. 3.

164. I. F. Stone, “Q. and A. on Korean Crisis,” *Daily Compass*, 27 June 1950, pp. 3, 20; I. F. Stone, “The Next Move Is Up to Moscow,” *Daily Compass*, 28 June 1950, pp. 3, 20; I. F. Stone, “Has Moscow Dumped the Peace Movement?” *Daily Compass*, 29 June 1950, pp. 5, 20; and Cottrell, *Izzy*, p. 162.

165. Patner, *I. F. Stone*, pp. 61–64; and I. F. Stone, “Le mystère Coréen: Combat contre un fantôme?” *L’observateur*, 15 February 1951, p. 7. Founded in 1950 by journalist Claude Bourdet, a Resistance hero, *L’observateur* called for a neutral Europe instead of one divided between the superpowers. Lawrence Van Gelder, “Claude Bourdet, 86, Leader of French Resistance and Leftist Editor,” *The New York Times*, 22 March 1996, p. D20.

166. I. F. Stone, “Les origines de la guerre de Corée,” *L’observateur*, 8 March 1951, pp. 12–14. In December 1951, *The Nation* magazine also published an article featuring Stone’s suspicions about how the war started. See I. F. Stone, “New Facts on Korea,” *The Nation*, 15 December 1951, pp. 514–517.

der, the war was General Douglas “MacArthur’s plan,” devised to make U.S. containment of Communism as robust and militaristic in Asia as it was in Europe. The invasion of South Korea “was encouraged politically by silence, invited militarily by defensive formations, and finally set off by some minor lunges across the border.”<sup>167</sup> As Bourdet wrote in *L’observateur* in February 1951,

If Stone’s thesis corresponds to reality, we are in the presence of the greatest swindle in the whole of military history; I use the term advisedly, for it is not a question of a harmless fraud but of a terrible maneuver in which deception is being consciously utilized to block peace at a time when it is possible.<sup>168</sup>

The articles did not resonate in the United States, and Stone could not even get them published in Britain. Undeterred, he turned the series into a book, completing a first draft in April 1951, just as Truman fired the U.S. commander in Korea, General MacArthur. More than 28 American and British publishers turned down the “too-hot-to-handle” manuscript before Stone found a willing U.S. publisher, the Monthly Review Press, a few weeks after his return to the United States in June 1951.<sup>169</sup> The Monthly Review cofounders and editors, the Marxists Leo Huberman (who had been *PM*’s labor editor) and Paul Sweezy, believed that Stone’s exposé, which he completed in March 1952, would be a document on par with Emile Zola’s *J’accuse!*—one of the most famous such texts in journalistic history.<sup>170</sup>

Despite the ambitions for Stone’s instant narrative, it landed with a thud and evoked the most critical reviews Stone would ever receive.<sup>171</sup> In 1941 (or 2001) terms, Stone’s explanation for the war’s outbreak was equivalent to claiming that elements of the U.S. government invited the surprise attack on

167. I. F. Stone, *The Hidden History of the Korean War* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1952), p. 44.

168. Leo Huberman and Paul Sweezy, “Publisher’s Foreword,” in Stone, *Hidden History*, p. vii.

169. *Ibid.*, p. ix; and James Aronson, *The Press and the Cold War* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), p. 109.

170. Huberman and Sweezy, “Publisher’s Foreword,” p. xii.

171. Seventeen years later, Monthly Review Press reissued *The Hidden History*, claiming that the Vietnam war lent “fresh urgency” to Stone’s analysis of the Korean war’s first year. *The Hidden History* remained the standard critical work on the war for decades, prefiguring in some ways the “revisionist school” of Cold War scholarship in the 1960s. Bruce Cumings, a prominent Korea scholar, termed Stone’s judgment about the conflict’s origins “both prescient and disturbing” in his two-volume history. But when documents from the Russian Presidential Archive became available in 1995, they flatly contradicted Stone’s thesis: Stalin was the arbiter of North Korea’s decision to invade. See Norman Kaner, “I. F. Stone and the Korean War,” in Thomas G. Paterson, ed., *Cold War Critics: Alternatives to American Foreign Policy in the Truman Years* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), pp. 240–265; Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Vol. II, *The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947–1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 618–619; and Kathryn Weathersby, “The Soviet Role in the Korean War,” in William Stueck, ed., *The Korean War in World History* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), pp. 61–92.

Pearl Harbor (or the World Trade Center Towers) out of a desire to instigate their preferred policy of war abroad and repression at home. As a reviewer for *The Washington Post* later put it, in Stone's hands Syngman Rhee's unpreparedness became calculated provocation, MacArthur's egomania was actually Machiavellianism, and "high-echelon muddle" was equivalent to a conspiracy. "[Stone] adds up two apples and two oranges, in the traditional French Left manner, and gets 1,000 grapefruit," concluded Peter Braestrup.<sup>172</sup>

*Foreign Affairs*, the journal of the foreign policy establishment, noted at the time that Stone's thesis "at times verges on the official Soviet line."<sup>173</sup> In *The New Republic*, the patrician publisher Michael Straight, who himself had been recruited as a Soviet agent in 1937 only to quit in disgust after the Nazi-Soviet pact, called *The Hidden History* a "fictive report." Straight wrote,

There are grave questions to be asked about Korea. Stone has not asked them. There are sharp criticisms to be made of MacArthur; they are not helped by caricature. Dissent is a tonic in an age of conformism. But this is not reasoned dissent.<sup>174</sup>

Even the Australian diplomat who reviewed the book in *The Nation* found Stone's representation of the war's origins "strained and fragile" and "tendentious."<sup>175</sup> The most trenchant criticism, however, came from Stone's erstwhile colleague at *The Nation*, Richard Rovere. After being fired from that magazine in late 1942, Rovere had worked his way up to become chief Washington correspondent for *The New Yorker* by 1948.<sup>176</sup> Rovere's review of the book appeared in the *New York Post*, Stone's former newspaper. Stone's old antagonist, James Wechsler, had everything to do with arranging it: Wechsler now edited the *Post*, which was resolutely liberal and anti-totalitarian.<sup>177</sup>

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172. Peter Braestrup, "Relating the Korean War to Vietnam," *The Washington Post*, 30 September 1969, p. B4.

173. "Recent Books," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 31, No. 1, (October 1952), p. 167.

174. Michael Straight, "A Fictive Report," *The New Republic*, 2 June 1952, pp. 21–22.

175. W. MacMahon Ball, "Some Questions in Korea," *The Nation*, 5 July 1952, pp. 14–15.

176. Rovere had been fired after offending Freda Kirchwey and Alvarez del Vayo, the foreign editor, in a *Nation* article that defended five European émigrés who had been accused of being Nazi agents by the Mexican Communist Party. Wrote Rovere, "Russia has built up over the years an international force of gangsters to deal with real and imagined enemies." Richard H. Rovere, "OGPU at Work," *The Nation*, 7 February 1942, pp. 163–164.

177. Wechsler wrote to Rovere, "Too many of our silly readers will be quoting Stone as gospel unless this job is done." See Guttenplan, *American Radical*, p. 266. Wechsler's ascension to the editorship and Stone's second exile from the *New York Post* were closely related. After the *New York Star* folded in January 1949, Stone wrote again for the *Post* for several months until a marital and political falling-out occurred between the newspaper's editor and publisher, Theodore Thackrey, and the paper's owner, Dorothy Schiff. U.S. leadership of the NATO alliance was one of the outstanding issues. Thackrey left to found *The Daily Compass*, taking Stone with him, and Schiff replaced Thackrey with Wechsler. See Cottrell, *Izzy*, pp. 148–149; and "Thackrey Resigns as Editor of *Post*," *The New York Times*, 7 April 1949, p. 27.

Rovere vehemently objected to Stone's assertion that the Truman administration's alleged "fear of peace" was at least as great as its fear of provoking a wider war, a thesis that Rovere described as "sheer poppycock."<sup>178</sup> But Rovere was not just critical of the book. He intimated that the "heavily documented rubbish" in *The Hidden History* meant that Stone had forfeited his claim to be a respectable journalist. "Never, I think has the Communist line been upheld with such an elaborate display of the mechanics of research," Rovere observed. Stone had once been an

adroit stylist, a shrewd and thoughtful analyst . . . with an incredible capacity for gathering and storing information. His politics were radical but he was not a Communist . . .

As *The Nation's* Washington correspondent during the early years of the war, Stone was as good as the best and perhaps was the best. I do not know what happened to deflect Stone's promising career in the forties—but I do know that something unpleasant to contemplate did happen.

For several years now, Stone has no longer been a promising journalist, or even a moderately good one. Zest, style and humor have departed his work, leaving it merely querulous, and it is always querulous in a certain way. The fact of the matter is that Stone's contribution to American journalism today is that of a man who thinks up good arguments for poor Communist positions.<sup>179</sup>

Decades later, Stone claimed that "those who were [not any longer] on the Left, like Rovere, hated me because I was still on the Left. . . . Rovere . . . was an ex-Communist. And ex's have to prove their apostasy."<sup>180</sup> By this time, admittedly, Rovere "really hated Izzy," but Rovere's critique pertained to the merits of *The Hidden History*.<sup>181</sup> The year before, Rovere had coauthored a well-received book on MacArthur and certainly was no shill or apologist for U.S. policy in South Korea.<sup>182</sup>

There is no evidence, however, to indicate that Stone's conspiratorial

178. Documents from Communist archives released after the end of the Cold War contradict Stone's assertion about the Truman administration's "almost hysterical fear of peace." Although stiff U.S. demands may have prolonged the armistice negotiations, the biggest single factor was Stalin's belief that a stalemate was in the Soviet interest. See Stone, *Hidden History*, p. 346; and Kathryn Weathersby, "Stalin, Mao, and the End of the Korean War," in Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945–1963* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Press, 1998), pp. 102, 108–109.

179. Richard Rovere, "History in the Stone Age: Hidden 'Facts' and Fiction of the War in Korea," *New York Post*, 11 May 1952, p. 12M; Cottrell, *Izzy*, p. 166; MacPherson, "All Governments Lie," pp. 268, 270; and Guttenplan, *American Radical*, p. 266.

180. Patner, *I. F. Stone*, pp. 48–49. Rovere remained Stone's harshest critic, stretching into the years Stone wrote for *The New York Review of Books*. "Izzy's scholarship is impeccable but based on a load of crap," Rovere observed. See Nobile, *Intellectual Skywriting*, pp. 143–144.

181. Guttenplan, *American Radical*, p. 516.

182. Richard H. Rovere and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The General and the President, and the Future of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Young, 1951).

thoughts about the Korean war's origins sprang from anything other than his own mind.<sup>183</sup> One revealing indicator is his position on allegations that U.S. forces had used biological warfare in Korea—a controversial charge when first made in 1951 and later proven, from Soviet documents unearthed in 1998, to be a palpable falsehood invented by the Chinese Communists.<sup>184</sup> In notable contrast to Wilfred Burchett (and although Stone was later accused of doing so), Stone did not propagate or lend credence to the germ warfare allegations, the falsity of which came as an unwelcome surprise to the Soviet Union.<sup>185</sup> “I do not believe them,” he wrote in July 1952. “I start from the premise that a certain amount of lying, some bare-faced, some quite sincere, is inseparable from the heat of warfare.” But the alleged confessions of downed American pilots were suspect, and “ring quite phony.”<sup>186</sup> Stone’s position on this one point came as little comfort to the U.S. government, which regarded *The Hidden History* as damaging to American interests.<sup>187</sup>

Even if Rovere’s intent was not to cast Stone out of the journalistic fraternity, he proved to be prophetic.<sup>188</sup> When *The Daily Compass* abruptly folded

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183. In 1988, Stone said of the book, “All I wanted to call attention to were unanswered questions that are still unanswered.” See Jim Naughton, “I. F. Stone and the Ancient Mystery,” *The Washington Post*, 10 March 1988, p. C2. It is possible that Stone’s perceptions were influenced by slanted coverage of the war that appeared in left-wing newspapers. Although the sources listed in *The Hidden History* were almost all from the U.S. press—mostly articles from *The New York Times*—citing only “respected” newspaper sources may have been a calculated decision. The references certainly did not reflect the notion, presented in the author’s preface, that the “press of France and Britain,” along with articles in the *Times* and *New York Herald Tribune*, alerted him to discrepancies between MacArthur’s communiqués and newspaper reports about the war. The book included one approving reference to articles by Wilfred Burchett, an Australian then reporting for the “leftist” *Ce soir* of Paris, and Alan Winnington of the London *Daily Worker*. *Ce soir* was not a “leftist” newspaper but was owned by the French Communist Party, and both Burchett (who would later write for the *National Guardian*) and Winnington (who was deeply involved in propagating the germ warfare allegation, along with Burchett) were accused in 1953 of being Communist propagandists by the British Ministry of Defence. Both men subsequently had their passports revoked by their respective governments. See Stone, *Hidden History*, pp. xiii, 316–317; “China Harps on Charges,” *The New York Times*, 23 November 1953, p. 4; and Joseph B. Treaster, “Wilfred Burchett Dies in Bulgaria,” *The New York Times*, 28 September 1983, p. B8.

184. Max Holland, “The Propagation and Power of Communist Security Services *Dezinformatsiya*,” *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 10–13.

185. Nobile, *Intellectual Skywriting*, 166; and Weathersby, “The Soviet Role in the Korean War,” pp. 83–84.

186. I. F. Stone, “Germ War? How to End the Argument,” *Daily Compass*, 3 July 1952, pp. 5, 16; and MacPherson, “*All Governments Lie*,” pp. 271–272.

187. Cottrell, *Izzy*, p. 166.

188. Positive reviews appeared in the *National Guardian*, the *Daily Worker*, and *The Militant*, the newspaper of the Socialist Workers Party. *The Worker* called Stone’s book “a valuable work of polemical journalism in the best bourgeois fashion.” *The Militant* attributed the negative reviews—particularly Rovere’s—to “orders [that] have gone out to the hired literary assassins of the pro-war Big Business press to ‘get’ Stone.” John Pittman, “I. F. Stone’s ‘Hidden History’ Debunks Korea War Myths,” *Daily Worker*, 29 June 1952, p. 7; and Art Preis, “A Trotskyist Defends New I. F. Stone Book,” *Daily Compass*, 26 May 1952, pp. 5, 16.

in November 1952, it was not just the latest newspaper to “drop dead” under Stone.<sup>189</sup> The end of the *Compass* also marked an end to the independent and radical daily journalism that had existed since *PM’s* founding in 1940 and the finish of Stone’s career as a regular newspaperman after nearly 30 years. Although there was no blacklist per se in American journalism, there were very few places left by 1952 in which Stone’s overall perspective might be considered acceptable. The vast majority of outlets were not about to hire the author of what was considered by the left to be the “definitive work on the [Korean war] hoax.”<sup>190</sup> As journalist Murray Kempton later observed, “The great watershed that made Izzy a pariah was his book on the Korean war. . . . We all felt then that he was basically a Soviet apologist.”<sup>191</sup> Under these trying economic and political circumstances Stone founded his *Weekly* in January 1953—even though for the rest of the 1950s he was the Hester Prynne of the Washington press corps, more often than not shunned, ostracized, and met with cold stares.

*The Hidden History* makes Kalugin’s claim about a pre-1956 relationship more plausible. Soviet intelligence would have welcomed a book that blamed the conflict on U.S. warmongers, possibly even bringing forgiveness for Stone’s earlier transgressions, such as his enthusiasm in the late 1940s for Tito. The usefulness of *The Hidden History* in influencing public opinion in non-aligned countries like India was palpable.<sup>192</sup> If a renewed relationship existed, it raises the possibility that Stone had a relationship analogous to the one that the CIA established with writers, editors, and essayists in the early 1950s. When these covert links were exposed in 1967, the CIA maintained that it never told the writers what to write or editors what to publish. Rather, the support was predicated on the notion that whatever was produced would be

189. Belfrage and Aronson, *Something to Guard*, p. 93.

190. *Ibid.*, p. 108. The *National Guardian*, a New York weekly founded in October 1948, and essentially the organ of the Communist-dominated Progressive Party, might have been an outlet for Stone after 1952. But he “objected to some of [its] policies” and disagreed on some major issues. See Belfrage and Aronson, *Something to Guard*, pp. 69, 300, 307–310. *The Nation* was another alternative. But when Stone contacted editor Freda Kirchwey and asked for his old job back, she demurred. Cottrell, *Izzy*, p. 171; and Carey McWilliams, *The Education of Carey McWilliams* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978), p. 237.

191. MacPherson, “*All Governments Lie*,” p. 270.

192. For example, Fraser Wilkins, the political counselor at the U.S. embassy in New Delhi, sent a dispatch about the book’s impact in India. To his chagrin, the book was serialized in a pro-Communist Mumbai newspaper, and all copies quickly sold out. The extent of damage was sufficient that Wilkins asked the State Department to prepare “refutatory materials.” Subsequently, officers in the CIA’s Office of Policy Coordination contemplated using a sympathetic congressional committee to mount a smear attack on Stone and his publishers on the grounds that they were “extreme left-wingers.” The CIA’s legislative counsel decided against the venture “as it would only boomerang on CIA and was primarily an internal security matter.” See Cottrell, *Izzy*, p. 166; and Office of Legislative Counsel, Journal, 12 November 1952, in CIA Records Search Tool, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.

congenial, in general, to U.S. interests in the cultural and ideological Cold War.

It may carry some significance that by 1955, Stone was writing more positively about Soviet rule in Eastern Europe, asserting that the USSR seemed to be loosening its grip voluntarily. The “unpleasant draconian . . . stooge rule” of the immediate postwar years was ostensibly giving way to a more relaxed policy, and Stone argued that truly independent socialist regimes might well emerge.<sup>193</sup> Still, the uncertainty and struggle for power that followed Stalin’s death in March 1953 also raise doubts about whether the KGB was sufficiently supple to reestablish a relationship with someone who was clearly as difficult to predict and impossible to control as Stone. Unless and until there are further disclosures from Soviet archives, the parameters of Stone’s relationship, if any, with Soviet intelligence during the mid-1950s may never be known.

What can be said, though, is that Kalugin’s recollection of a falling-out in 1956 certainly accords with Stone’s personal history. As the year began, Stone was seeing hopeful signs of a new Popular Front strategy, one in which the Communist parties in the West would embrace, with Khrushchev’s approval, parliamentary forms and cease their “slavishly abject dependence” on Moscow.<sup>194</sup> But then Khrushchev delivered his secret speech denouncing Stalin before the Twentieth Party Congress in February 1956—an event that, when it soon became public, was as momentous for CPUSA members and fellow travelers as the Nazi-Soviet pact had been seventeen years earlier. For many true believers, including Stone’s brother Marcus, who had been in and out of the party since the 1930s, Khrushchev’s speech was the final blow.<sup>195</sup>

Stone’s response to the secret speech was just short of gleeful. The speech validated his criticism of the Communist “knuckle-heads” and “prize idiots” taught “to believe and obey whatever lies they were told from Moscow.”<sup>196</sup> Yet the profound question remained: Had actually existing socialism in the USSR been a perversion of an ideal, or congenitally flawed? Did the speech augur a flowering of liberty inside the Soviet Union? Could democratic socialism emerge? The secret speech was the last straw for many true believers, but Stone, ever the contrarian, construed it as possibly a hopeful sign. He had to

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193. Cottrell, *Izzy*, pp. 186–187. Stone’s new take on Soviet rule was expressed in three articles: I. F. Stone, “Peace Is Breaking Out,” *Weekly*, 2 May 1955, p. 1; I. F. Stone, “Russia Offers to Lift Its Iron Curtain for Peace,” *Weekly*, 16 May 1955, pp. 1, 4; and I. F. Stone, “The Liberation of Europe Has Begun,” *Weekly*, 23 May 1955, p. 1.

194. I. F. Stone, “The Meaning of Khrushchev’s Revisions in Communist Doctrine,” *Weekly*, 20 February 1956, p. 2.

195. Cottrell, *Izzy*, p. 187.

196. I. F. Stone, “In the Muddy Wake of the Moscow Melodrama,” *Weekly*, 26 March 1956, pp. 1, 4.



see for himself. Having regained his passport, Stone decided that a visit to the Soviet Union was warranted, his first ever.

Six days in Moscow shook him to his marrow. He was in “agony” on the way home, like a swimmer whose lungs were bursting.<sup>197</sup> To his credit, what he experienced spoke more powerfully than his dreams: the Soviet Union was totalitarian after all, though he shied from using that precise word. Nor did he follow the counsel of friends who pleaded with him to hold his tongue for the sake of world peace. The Soviet Union “*is not a good society*,” he wrote upon his return, “*and it is not led by honest men*. No society is good in which men fear to think—much less speak—freely.”<sup>198</sup> On the question of whether the past 30 years represented an aberration, Stone declared that “Stalinism was the natural fruit of the whole spirit of the Communist movement.”<sup>199</sup>

The Soviet invasion of Hungary in November 1956 only hardened Stone’s new perspective. Even before the tanks rolled into Budapest, he had explicitly called for the “Left to break away from all Communist influence and strike out on a new path determined in each country by its own conditions and traditions.”<sup>200</sup>

No one on the left was more liberated by the events of 1956 than I. F. Stone. Now he was free to become a New Leftist before a New Left existed. This change, in turn, opened the way for him to move from pariah to a character and, finally, to icon.

## Stone and the Hiss Case

Any reconsideration of I. F. Stone should specifically address how he viewed the Cold War spy and loyalty controversies—or chose not to—even if one accepts a minimalist interpretation of Stone’s brushes with Soviet intelligence.

Stone often commented about the cases that rocked the country in the late 1940s and were responsible for the repression, fear, and culture of conformity that he repeatedly decried. Most frequently, Stone wrote in passionate defense of government officials, high and low, who had been unfair targets of smears and leaks, sometimes when their real crime was to have opposed a powerful congressman on a point of policy. One such occasion was the March 1948 attack by HUAC chairman J. Parnell Thomas on physicist Edward

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197. As Guttenplan points out, although Stone despised Whittaker Chambers, this metaphor was remarkably similar to Chambers’s imagery when he broke with Communism. See Guttenplan, *American Radical*, p. 327.

198. Stone, “STALINISM IS FAR FROM LIQUIDATED,” pp. 1–4; emphasis in original.

199. *Ibid.*

200. Stone, “In the Muddy Wake of the Moscow Melodrama,” pp. 1, 4.

Condon. (Condon had been a prime mover in asserting postwar civilian control over nuclear energy, which Thomas had bitterly opposed). In the summer of 1949, Stone wrote a stinging series of articles in defense of Condon, all of which roundly attacked J. Edgar Hoover's FBI for compiling the innuendo that Thomas had used in his blundering effort to destroy the outspoken physicist, who also happened to be Stone's friend.<sup>201</sup>

The case in which Stone became the most personally involved was the prosecution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg—but not during their sensational trial, when he stayed uncharacteristically silent. Because he did not want to “play into the hands of reaction,” he eschewed the “shrill, hysterical and mendacious” propaganda campaign that insisted the Rosenbergs were completely innocent and victims of a heinous government frame-up. Instead, he attempted to sit on the fence: “we just don't know” whether the Rosenbergs are guilty or innocent.<sup>202</sup> When he did become fully engaged, it was to crusade against the great and unfair disparity between their death sentences and the limited prison terms meted out to others convicted of nuclear espionage.<sup>203</sup>

Although Stone mainly railed against the injustices that occurred, he was also prone to discounting the significance of a given spy case and insisting that the truly bad actor was some element of the U.S. government. That was the line of argument he employed when the first spy case, involving a foreign-policy journal called *Amerasia*, broke in June 1945. Stone was quick to suggest—falsely—that the prosecution was the work of a “reactionary clique” inside the State Department, which, among other things, was scheming to save Japan from decisive defeat so that it could be preserved as a bulwark against Soviet socialism.<sup>204</sup> Four years later, in a similar vein, Stone hammered on the theme of FBI misconduct during the first trial in the Judith Coplon espionage case, until her own appearance on the witness stand proved disastrous

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201. I. F. Stone, “Debunking FBI Alibis in the Condon Case,” *Daily Compass*, 15 June 1949, p. 5; I. F. Stone, “Definitive Analysis of How FBI Works,” *Daily Compass*, 16 June 1949, p. 5; I. F. Stone, “Continuing Analysis of J. E. Hoover's Letter,” *Daily Compass*, 17 June 1949, p. 5; and I. F. Stone, “Policing Thoughts Is Bad in Any Political System,” *Daily Compass*, 19 June 1949, p. 5. For a balanced account of the HUAC attack on Condon, see Walter Goodman, *The Committee: The Extraordinary Career of the House Committee on Un-American Activities* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1968), pp. 231–239.

202. I. F. Stone, “Time for New Tactics on Rosenberg-Sobell, Too,” *Weekly*, 2 July 1956, p. 1; and Patner, *I. F. Stone*, pp. 83–84, 87.

203. MacPherson, “*All Governments Lie*,” pp. 297–298.

204. I. F. Stone, “Arrest of ‘the Six,’” *The Nation*, 16 June 1945, pp. 666–667. The investigation had been instigated by an Office of Strategic Services officer in February 1945 after he was stunned to find nearly verbatim passages in *Amerasia* from a report he had written on British-American relations in Southeast Asia. For a good overview of a complicated affair, see John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *Early Cold War Spies: The Espionage Trials That Shaped American Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 25–48.

to her credibility.<sup>205</sup> Decades later, he disingenuously suggested that Victor Perlo, his former source at the War Production Board, had been unjustifiably “purged” from the federal government. “Now he would have been a sitting duck if he was passing any secrets,” Stone observed. “But the government never laid a finger on him.”<sup>206</sup>

Stone also routinely denigrated the testimony and motives of former Communists-turned-informants. Whittaker Chambers, naturally, was an object of particular scorn. Stone was one of the “angriest” critics of *Witness*, Chambers’s confessional autobiography.<sup>207</sup> Renegades and deserters such as Chambers, Stone claimed, were full of self-hate for abandoning their Communist faith—self-loathing that manifested itself as bitterness toward their former comrades. With such twisted feelings, informants were hardly equipped to supply reliable or objective observations about Communism in the United States.<sup>208</sup> Other informants who were special targets of Stone’s disdain, despite the essential accuracy of their testimony, were Louis Budenz, the former managing editor of the *Daily Worker*, and Elizabeth Bentley, a KGB courier and go-between from 1939 to 1944. Budenz, who knew Stone’s brother, had the “glibness of a traveling evangelist describing the details of hell,” according to Stone.<sup>209</sup> Stone likewise intimated that Bentley, whose 1948 revelations did so much to shape public attitudes toward Soviet espionage and the CPUSA’s complicity in those activities, was unreliable, cowardly, and prone to dramatic exaggerations—besides exemplifying another case of governmental misconduct.<sup>210</sup>

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205. I. F. Stone, “Why Didn’t the FBI Look in Judy’s Locker?” *Daily Compass*, 20 June 1949, p. 5; I. F. Stone, “What FBI Men Withheld about Coplon Love Tiff,” *Daily Compass*, 21 June 1949, p. 5; I. F. Stone, “Vice Squad Methods in the Coplon Case,” *Daily Compass*, 23 June 1949, p. 5; and I. F. Stone, “The Coplon Verdict,” *Daily Compass*, 3 July 1949, p. 5. Coplon was a Justice Department employee who passed information about FBI operations against Soviet agents to the KGB. Haynes and Klehr, *Early Cold War Spies*, pp. 192–207.

206. Patner, *I. F. Stone*, p. 86. In 1944–1945, Perlo was the ringleader of one of the most active espionage groups in the U.S. government, a fact known to the FBI by 1947 via the Venona intercepts. None of the Perlo group members was ever prosecuted, however, because the government did not want to disclose the Venona secret in court, and the only other evidence—Elizabeth Bentley’s sworn testimony—was insufficient to gain a conviction. See Weinstein and Vassiliev, *Haunted Wood*, pp. 223–237; and Haynes and Klehr, *VENONA*, pp. 123–129. Stone also defended Cedric Belfrage (another Soviet agent) as an alleged victim of an overzealous government. See I. F. Stone, “How Long Will Our Liberal Editors Remain Silent about Belfrage?” *Weekly*, 23 May 1955, p. 4.

207. Sam Tanenhaus, *Whittaker Chambers: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1997), p. 469.

208. “Star Performers in the Witch Hunt,” in Stone, *Truman Era*, pp. 182–190. The three articles on Chambers were originally published in *The Daily Compass* on 12–14 February 1952.

209. I. F. Stone, “Budenz: Portrait of a Christian Hero,” in Stone, *Truman Era*, pp. 190–193. The article was originally published in *The Daily Compass*, 23 April 1950.

210. I. F. Stone, “The Test of the Latest Bentley ‘Sensation,’” *Daily Compass*, 7 June 1949, p. 5; and I. F. Stone, “Eye-Opener: Bentley’s One Conviction in that ‘Spy’ Ring,” *Weekly*, 30 November 1953, p. 2.

Stone's first and foremost concern was the meta-narrative—the political exploitation of and repercussions from the espionage cases, even decades after they had ceased dominating the news. In the mid-1980s, Stone was still arguing that the government's attack on the CPUSA's involvement in espionage was a concerted effort to scare liberals away from voting for Henry Wallace in 1948.<sup>211</sup> Sometimes, Stone's concern over how the espionage cases played out politically was exhibited in very curious ways. In 1983, for example, Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton were putting the finishing touches on *The Rosenberg File*.<sup>212</sup> They wanted to open the book with a 1956 passage from Stone that seemed germane: "It will be a long time, if ever, before we know [the truth] for certain. . . . But I doubt whether we will ever find there was a deliberate frameup. Fanaticism had the same momentum on both sides." The quote seemed appropriate because Radosh and Milton were confident that they had discerned the elusive truth. Indeed, Stone privately expressed agreement with their view of the case after a long personal briefing during which Radosh presented his and Milton's findings.<sup>213</sup>

When Stone received a copy of the galleys, however, and saw his words quoted in the front matter, he went "ballistic," according to Radosh. Apparently, to agree privately with the book was one thing and to be associated with it publicly was quite another. Stone demanded that the quoted passage be removed because he insisted it was akin to a blurb: it implied an endorsement of the book. He threatened to sue the authors and the publisher unless it was taken out. Radosh replied that the quote reflected the authors' approval of Stone for being one of the few on the left who had questioned the propaganda campaign of the 1950s and did not buy into the cult of the Rosenbergs. Eventually, Stone relented, though he also had no choice legally.<sup>214</sup>

That episode might be written off, except that it was preceded six years earlier by another puzzling response to an old controversy. In 1976, Holt, Rinehart and Winston published a new book on the Alger Hiss case, *Alger Hiss: The True Story*, by John Chabot Smith, a former reporter for the defunct *New York Herald Tribune* who had covered both of Hiss's trials. *The New York Review of Books* commissioned Allen Weinstein, who was working on his own lengthy study of the case, to review the book, which portrayed Hiss as the victim of a government frame-up. Weinstein by this point not only had come to a different conclusion but had also sued the FBI to gain access to

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211. Patner, *I. F. Stone*, p. 86.

212. Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton, *The Rosenberg File: A Search for the Truth* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1983). A second edition was put out in paperback by Yale University Press in 1997.

213. Radosh, "Romancing I. F. Stone," p. 9.

214. *Ibid.*

15,376 pages of documents on the Hiss case, records that Smith had never seen. Weinstein “lit into Hiss [and Smith’s book] with such enthusiasm and authority” that his six-page review became a front-page story in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* even before it appeared in *The New York Review of Books*.<sup>215</sup>

Stone was among the first to respond to Weinstein, leaping to Hiss’s defense in a rare departure from his normal pose of agnosticism about that case.<sup>216</sup> In a *New York Times* op-ed article, Stone presented a “new revelation,” which he claimed was a “tantalizing loose thread . . . [that if firmly pulled] might unravel the melodramatic web woven a quarter century ago around the notorious pumpkin papers.” Those papers, “as everyone knows, were the centerpiece and symbol of the postwar witch hunt. . . . [and] had distinct elements of stage-managed fraud,” asserted Stone.<sup>217</sup> What Stone did privately was just as striking. He believed that *The New York Review of Books* had been grossly unfair to Smith: “Before [his] book had a chance to be evaluated, even read, it was really destroyed by Weinstein.” Stone was particularly upset because the right wing had taken great delight in having such an article about the Hiss case published in *The New York Review of Books*, the citadel of left/liberal thought. Stone did not want to bear responsibility for an editorial decision he deeply disagreed with and had not been consulted about, so he resigned as a contributing editor of the *Review*.<sup>218</sup>

Although this episode is interesting in and of itself, its most significant aspect is to underscore a blank space. Despite Stone’s prodigious output of books, articles, and essays, and his reputation as the outstanding investigative reporter of his generation, he wrote next to nothing about the government’s prosecution of Alger Hiss, the case that put a generation on trial. During the two-and-a-half years it took for the Hiss controversy to wend its way through Congress and all the way up to the Supreme Court, Stone was completely si-

215. Robert Sherrill, “Alger Hiss,” *The New York Times*, 25 April 1976, p. 255; Peter Kihss, “Professor Says Alger Hiss Lied about His Links with Chambers,” *The New York Times*, 18 March 1976, pp. 1, 74; William Chapman, “Hiss a Liar, Case Expert Concludes,” *The Washington Post*, 19 March 1976, p. A1; Allen Weinstein, “Was Alger Hiss Framed?” *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 23, No. 5, 1 April 1976, pp. 16–18; and G. Edward White, *Alger Hiss’s Looking-Glass Wars: The Covert Life of a Soviet Spy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 184–186.

216. Just before Stone’s *Times* op-ed article was published, he declined to participate in a survey of elite opinion about the Hiss case. Philip Nobile, “The State of the Art of Alger Hiss,” *Harper’s*, April 1976, p. 73. Subsequently, Stone told Patner in the mid-1980s, “[T]here’s a whole spectrum of possibilities, and a lot of gray areas in [the Hiss] case.” See Patner, *I. F. Stone*, p. 86.

217. I. F. Stone, “The ‘Flimflam’ in the Pumpkin Papers,” *The New York Times*, 1 April 1976, p. 31. Stone’s op-ed was grossly misleading and a piece of pettifoggery. He highlighted trivial documents found on the “pumpkin papers” microfilm, which Chambers said had come from another agent, Ward Pigman. Stone also pretended that these mundane documents were representative of Chambers’s evidence against Hiss, which clearly was not the case.

218. Patner, *I. F. Stone*, pp. 84–85.

lent about the most potent and politically damaging case of them all. Writers are seldom criticized for what they do not write, and rightly so. But given the centrality of the Hiss case to the domestic Cold War, the omission is striking and Stone's later explanation not credible when one thinks about it. Stone was seldom, if ever, at a loss for words or an opinion, and his curiosity was relentless.

Stone's answer for this lacuna—what he himself might have termed a “significant trifle”—seems to have been that he “was never able to make up [his] mind about Hiss,” although there are grounds to doubt even that.<sup>219</sup> Given what is now known about Stone's own dalliances with Soviet intelligence, a more accurate answer may be that Stone deliberately shied away from writing about the Hiss controversy at its height—except to disparage Chambers—because Stone had learned or suspected that the charges were likely true, and the case therefore cut too close to home. Stone, too, had consciously cooperated with Soviet intelligence, even if he never came close to being the kind of agent Hiss was. Writing about the Hiss case would have been akin to writing about himself in a sense and would have necessarily involved revisiting decisions made in the context of the 1930s. In all likelihood, any effort by Stone to write honestly about the Hiss case would have been seized on and misused by what he saw as his lifelong foe, the forces of reaction.

Stone was an authentic, muckraking radical in the best American tradition. Yet he also personifies, perhaps uniquely, the tragic encounter between indigenous radicalism and Soviet Communism during the twentieth century, including the subordination of the former to the latter for decades, resulting in the enervation and long decline of the progressive impulse in American political life.

To paraphrase Orwell, Stone's sin was being anti-fascist without being, for too long, anti-totalitarian.

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219. *Ibid.*, p. 85. Stone often observed that the key to good reporting was an ability to notice the “significant trifle.” See Guttenplan, *American Radical*, p. 476. Given Stone's sources on the left, if he cared to inquire he could have learned earlier than most what Nathaniel Weyl told a Senate panel in 1952: that Hiss was a member of a Communist cell inside the federal government as of 1934. Indeed, Victor Perlo knew Hiss to be a Soviet agent, though Perlo was not likely to disclose that to Stone. See “Writer Calls Hiss Red Cell Member,” *The New York Times*, 20 February 1952, p. 15; and Haynes, Klehr, and Vassiliev, *Spies*, pp. 13–14.