

covering that Stalin was one), this man, who blasted the Soviet Union for rejecting the Marshall Plan and eventually became a severe critic of Soviet repression, was falsely accused by his critics of following the party line, or worse.

Izzy denounced the Kennedy administration's invasion of the Bay of Pigs, which he regarded as illegal and unwise, and its conduct during the Cuban Missile Crisis, which he saw as reckless. After JFK's assassination, he warned his readers, "Think it over carefully before canonizing Kennedy as an apostle of peace." In contrast to his journalistic brethren who accepted the Johnson administration's invocation of the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin episode

as an excuse for American engagement in Vietnam, Izzy highlighted the antiwar remarks of senators Wayne Morse and Ernst Gruening in the bold-faced boxes featured in his newsletter.

All of this and much more may be found in Myra MacPherson's *All Governments Lie!* The book acknowledges Izzy the iconoclast's minor

shortcomings and vanities even as it celebrates and captures his prescience, his independence, his moral perspective ("He had no master but his conscience"), his humor, and his gift for the apt phrase. (*The Washington Post*, he said, was exciting to read "because you never know on which page you will find a front-page story.")

Like Plutarch, who illuminated his subjects by devoting chapters to parallel lives (Alcibiades and Coriolanus, Demosthenes and Cicero, etc.), MacPherson punctuates her affectionate portrait of Izzy, the quintessential outsider, denied admission to the Overseas Writers group, by periodically contrasting him with fellow journalist Walter Lippmann, who dined regularly at the White House. But MacPherson, a former reporter for *The Washington Post*, tells Stone's story primarily through his journalism (for *PM*, *The Nation*, *The New York Post*, his newsletter, and *The New York Review of Books*), supplemented by revealing

personal anecdotes and the requisite historical context.

Her impressive book, 16 years in the making, draws on but goes far beyond the two previous Stone volumes: Andrew Patner's invaluable collection of interviews recorded in 1984, and Robert C. Cottrell's updated doctoral thesis, published in 1992 as *Izzy*. She generously credits D. D. Guttenplan, whose own unpublished biography of Izzy is much anticipated, with putting the lie to the allegations of those who tried, a few years ago, to argue that he was some sort of Soviet agent. Izzy once famously said, "I have so much fun I ought to be arrested." *All Governments Lie!* makes everlastingly clear that the last thing I. F. Stone would ever be arrested for is serving as anybody's agent but his own.

—Victor Navasky



Journalist I. F. Stone at his desk in 1968

## The South's Hard Swallow

NEGROES KNOW THEIR place and are happy with segregation.

They have no desire to vote or take part in political affairs.

Integrating schools and public accommodations will lead to mongrelization of the races.

The civil rights movement is a communist plot and a threat to the freedoms of white people.

God is a segregationist. He says so in the Bible.

If you were a white person living in the South before the world turned upside down in the 1960s, you probably believed every one of those statements. You probably believed them if you were a white Northerner, too, but that's another story. Jason Sokol, a young historian at Cornell University, is concerned with white Southerners, and he is determined that we not forget how far the South had to go to expel the poison of racism.

Here is but a sample of how deep the poison ran and how casually it was accommodated by otherwise-decent people. A white woman who

### THERE GOES MY EVERYTHING:

White Southerners in the Age of Civil Rights, 1945–1975.

By Jason Sokol.  
Knopf. 433 pp. \$27.95

headed the Dallas County, Alabama, chamber of commerce told an interviewer in 1952, "I'd say this is a nigger heaven. . . . The niggers know their place and seem to keep in their place. They're the friendly sort around here. If they are hungry, they will come and tell you, and there is not a person who wouldn't feed and clothe a nigger."

Sokol naturally devotes much space to the netherworld of Alabama and Mississippi, but he also reminds us that the upper South, from Virginia to Arkansas, produced politicians willing to exploit the racism of the white majority. He does not rely on some collective memory to remind us how widespread such thinking was, but presents his evidence—oral histories from libraries and universities across the South, books and articles on the civil rights era, and a paper trail of apparently thousands of records left from the period—so relentlessly that it almost appears as if he fears not being taken seriously. He means to let no skeptic get away unpersuaded.

A young white Southerner reading this book today may be tempted to think, "Those attitudes could not have been pinned on me," but Sokol produces several polls from the 1950s and '60s demonstrating that a vast, embarrassing majority of white Southerners certainly did harbor such thoughts. As late as 1968, a poll in North Carolina found that more than three-quarters of the state's whites believed that "whites work harder than Negroes" and 58 percent believed that "Negroes are happier than whites."

The history Sokol chronicles is not all bleak. He goes to pains to find the open-minded exceptions and the born-and-bred segregationists who slowly—or, in rare cases, abruptly—changed their minds. He makes clear that those people helped the civil rights movement accomplish as much as it did. There were the small bands of newspaper editors, educators, church leaders, and others who were simply blessed with inquiring minds and a sense of morality that finally weighed heavier on their consciences than the beliefs they had inherited.

But the whites who did the right thing do not

need to have their story told again. It is the others who deserve to be memorialized. These were not evil people, as evil is generally conceived. It was their very ordinariness that made their poison so toxic. If millions of people could pray in church every Sunday and live side by side with millions of other people they believed to be inferior beings, that can only mean that a great sickness was among them. The astonishing thing is that the sickness prevailed through so many generations without destroying the society.

Look closely and you can still find signs of a lingering fever—on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line.

—Roy Reed

## Never Enough Numbers

THE GREAT APPEAL OF STATISTICS is that they tell stories. Consider these numbers from the latest *Historical Statistics of the United States*:

- From 1960 to 1995, the number of students attending Catholic schools (elementary and secondary) dropped more than 50 percent, from 5.25 million to 2.49 million. In those same years, membership in Catholic congregations increased 43 percent, from 42.1 million to 60.3 million.

- Since 1900, U.S. farmers have more than tripled wheat production per acre to 40 bushels in 1997, up from 12. For corn, the gains have been even larger—127 bushels per acre in 1997 versus 28 in 1900. But in the previous century, crop yields barely improved at all. In 1800, wheat yields were 15 bushels per acre and corn yields 25 bushels per acre.

- In 1890, the average U.S. tariff on all imports was almost 30 percent. On those imports on which tariffs were actually levied (some goods weren't subject to any tariffs), it was about 45 percent. These rates typified the 19th century. By 2000, the average tariff was 1.6 per-

### HISTORICAL STATISTICS OF THE UNITED STATES: Millennial Edition.

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