

# An ‘Exemplary Comrade’: The Socialist Workers Party’s 40-year-long cover-up of Stalinist spy Sylvia Callen

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*In May 1947 the Socialist Workers Party received information that Sylvia Callen, the personal secretary of long-time party leader James P. Cannon, was an agent of the Soviet secret police, the GPU. It quickly became clear that Callen had concealed critical personal information about her Stalinist background when she joined the SWP in 1938. For nearly nine years Callen had high-level and unrestricted access to the party’s most sensitive information. However, rather than exposing Callen’s murderous role as a spy within the Trotskyist movement, the Socialist Workers Party launched a cover-up that lasted for nearly 40 years. What follows is a historical account of the cover-up and its exposure by the International Committee of the Fourth International.*

On Saturday, March 8, 1947, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) ran a banner headline in its publication, the *Militant*, which read:

“Stalin’s guilt in Trotsky murder bared by ex-Daily Worker editor: Budenz discloses details of how 1940 assassination was prepared, implicates leaders of Communist Party in GPU conspiracy.” [1]

The article detailed revelations from former American Stalinist leader Louis Budenz’s forthcoming book *This Is My Story*. The SWP had acquired an advanced copy and made its contents known for the first time.

*This Is My Story* vindicated the Fourth International’s insistence that the assassination of Trotsky had been ordered by Stalin and carried out by the GPU, the secret police of the Stalinist regime in the USSR.

The lead article on March 8 in the *Militant*, written by John G. Wright, explained, “As an eyewitness and direct participant, Budenz, who served the Kremlin loyally for ten years, now supplies conclusive evidence that top operators of Stalin’s secret police worked for years on American soil to prepare for the murder of Trotsky.” [2]

Less than seven years had passed since a Stalinist agent, using the false name Frank Jacson, murdered Leon Trotsky in Coyoacan, Mexico City, and it was only a decade since the peak of the mass exterminations during the Great Terror of 1936–39 within the Soviet Union.

Aside from Trotsky’s assassin, who eventually was identified as Ramon Mercader del Rio, while serving a 20-year murder sentence in a Mexican prison, nobody had been punished or jailed for the crimes of the GPU. Budenz’s book exposed the conspiracy behind Trotsky’s murder. It not only confirmed that the assassination was ordered in Moscow. Budenz also named leaders and members of the American Communist Party as accomplices.

Budenz revealed that in December 1936, a GPU agent asked to meet with him secretly in a nondescript restaurant on East 14th Street.

“It was rather early in my Party career that I was summoned to meet members of the Soviet secret police working on American soil,” he wrote. [3] The agent, who spoke with a heavy Russian accent, described himself as “Richards.” The two sat in a corner, the clatter of dishes from the dinner crowd in the background. “As we ate together, Richards quietly

told me his purpose in seeing me. His commission was to investigate the condition of the Social Democrats, and to determine who among them and what Trotskyites and ‘fascists’ were making organized efforts to enter the Soviet Union.” [4]

Just four months earlier, in August 1936, the first Moscow Show Trial had concluded, resulting in the execution of 16 defendants, including Old Bolsheviks Grigory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev, for engaging in a “Trotskyite conspiracy.” During the ensuing campaign of mass murder to terrorize and destroy opposition to the Stalinist regime, hundreds of thousands were executed or thrown into labor camps. The mere accusation of sympathy for Trotskyism meant a death sentence.

When the topic of discussion turned to the August trial, Budenz expressed his support. The GPU was now preparing purges on an international scale.

As the meeting between Budenz and “Richards” took place, Trotsky was aboard a tanker headed from Norway to Mexico, fleeing from a continent comprised of governments who had rejected his appeals for asylum. With Trotsky taking up residence in Mexico, the GPU was preparing its North American counterparts to carry out his assassination.

After this meeting, Budenz began his assignment:

“Where did I fit into an enterprise for the protection of the Soviet Union from plotters? I was readily told. I was to collect all the data I had on enemies of the Soviet Union within the Left or labor ranks, and specifically the Trotskyites. Their names were to be given and everything else about them that might be pertinent to this inquiry.”

The GPU knew it was the SWP—the leading section of the Fourth International—that was responsible for ensuring Trotsky’s security in Mexico. As a result, Budenz wrote, “particular attention was to be paid those who did much traveling, especially abroad.” [5]

Budenz exposed CP leaders Earl Browder and Jack Stachel as personally supervising the infiltration campaign. With their collaboration, Budenz was able “to move back and forth across Manhattan” meeting GPU agents and delivering information on the SWP. [6]

In 1937, Budenz began working with an agent named “Roberts,” a.k.a. Dr. Gregory Rabinowitz, a leader of the American Stalinist spy ring. Rabinowitz had been tasked with weaving a net of agents to entrap Trotsky, and Budenz was to help plot the most intimate details. Rabinowitz asked Budenz, “Can you tell me where the Trotskyites here get their mail from Trotsky in Mexico City?” [7] Budenz obliged, mining his sources for information and helping the GPU get to those close to

Trotsky, always looking for information regarding the SWP's international correspondence.

"Photographs, too, came into [Roberts-Rabinowitz's] field of inquiry," Budenz wrote.

"He began to bring me a number, one after another, and ask, 'Do you know this man? Or that?' For the most part they seemed to be men and women seeking Soviet visas. Then he inquired about certain names on lists, which he said were 'Trotskyite couriers.' One of these was an inconspicuous newspaperman working in and out of China, who later, I believe, became associated with Reuters. Another was Sylvia Ageloff, whose name became widely known as the woman who brought Leon Trotsky's assassin, 'Frank Jacson,' into Mexico." [8]

Budenz and the GPU built a network of agents to acquire information about the Trotskyist movement and the SWP's communications with Trotsky. Rabinowitz would propose candidates and Budenz would supply information on them, providing the GPU with his appraisal of their political trustworthiness and abilities for espionage.

"Generally, he [Rabinowitz] asked me first about their Party records and then how they would fit into further underground work among the Trotskyites or other groups," Budenz wrote. "After getting the individual's record, my job was to size him or her up according to their attitudes and associations (if I knew them in the past)." [9]

The central purpose of the infiltration was to kill Trotsky. To this end, Budenz exposed how he helped put the GPU in touch with Ruby Weil, who orchestrated the meeting between her friend Sylvia Ageloff, a member of the SWP, and Mercader, Trotsky's future killer.

Rabinowitz asked Budenz "that I bring Miss Y [later identified as Ruby Weil], a young woman who he had learned was a friend of Sylvia Ageloff," to a meeting at a Chicago hotel. [10] Weil was later to work with Paris-based GPU agent Mark Zborowski, party name "Etienne," to give Mercader access to Trotsky's household in Mexico City through Ageloff. Zborowski was, at the time, a member of the Fourth International.

The rendezvous between Mercader and Ageloff took place in Paris in 1938. Beginning in 1939, the two traveled to Mexico City together, where Ageloff introduced Mercader, the man she knew as Frank Jacson, into Trotsky's household. [11] The Stalinist ring around Trotsky was growing tighter, and the stage for his death was being set.

### **SWP demands grand jury indict Stalinist spies and CP leaders**

In response to the Budenz revelations, the SWP immediately began to publish the new information as widely as possible, demanding an investigation into the Stalinists' role in infiltrating the Trotskyist movement and assassinating its founder and leader.

All this was reported in the pages of the *Militant*. [12] The front page article of March 8, 1947 explained: "Sinister and secret details connected with the assassination of Leon Trotsky by Stalin's hired killer in Mexico City in August 1940 have been disclosed by Louis F. Budenz." [13]

*Militant* said Budenz's book "now supplies conclusive evidence that top operators of Stalin's secret police worked for years on American soil to prepare the murder of Trotsky" and that "American Stalinists, including Budenz himself, helped pave the way for the assassin 'Frank Jacson' to worm his way into Trotsky's home." [14]

The *Militant* detailed how the book described Budenz meeting "with the GPU chieftain in charge of 'Anti-Trotskyist' activities," an agent known as "Richards." Budenz "was consulted on the selection of spies to penetrate the Trotskyist ranks" and "contacted GPU chieftains at least once a week. No piece of information was deemed too unimportant." [15]

The article continued: "Stalin's murder machine was particularly eager to collect every scrap of information concerning Trotskyists who travelled abroad. They were in search of some individual whom they could enmesh in Europe in their murder plot." Budenz's book showed how the Stalinists "had laid all the preliminary groundwork in the United States in 1937 for the assassination of Leon Trotsky in Mexico in 1940." [16]

The *Militant* proclaimed, "the revelations of Budenz fill in the missing threads in the fabric of evidence that places the responsibility for the murder of Leon Trotsky on the shoulders of Joseph Stalin." [17]

Based on Budenz's account of GPU infiltration and the plot to kill Trotsky, the SWP launched a public campaign to expose the GPU and the role of the American Communist Party. The SWP immediately put forward the demand that a grand jury subpoena key Stalinists so those responsible for orchestrating the infiltration of the Trotskyist movement would be forced to testify about the penetration of the Trotskyist movement, and called for the exposure of those agents remaining in the movement.

The revelations and demands for an investigation had an immense political impact among broader circles of the political left, which the SWP fought to mobilize in a commission to demand a grand jury to investigate the role of the GPU and the Communist Party USA in Trotsky's death.

On March 17, 1947, an SWP-led coalition that included Socialist Party leader Norman Thomas, presented a petition to the district attorney in Manhattan demanding the convocation of a grand jury. The SWP mobilized a number of leading political and intellectual figures, including the author James T. Farrell and academics John Dewey and Sidney Hook, who reflected popular anger over the news of the Stalinist plot and gave the demand for a grand jury a broad popular appeal that the state could not ignore.

On March 22, The *Militant's* lead headline read, "Ask grand jury to investigate Trotsky's murder—delegation demands probe of Stalin's agent who plotted assassination in New York City." [18]

The *Militant* reported the delegation "held a 45 minute meeting with Jacob Grumet, assistant District Attorney, to demand action on the sensational revelations made by Louis F. Budenz in his recently published book, *This is My Story*. In his autobiography, the former *Daily Worker* editor and Communist Party national committee member, testifies from personal knowledge that GPU agents, aided by American Communist Party leaders, plotted their moves here which ended in the murder of Trotsky in Mexico City in 1940. The delegation handed the District Attorney a statement signed by scores of prominent citizens." [19]

The statement delivered to the assistant District Attorney on March 17, 1947 read, in part:

"Earl Browder, Jack Stachel, Budenz himself, and all other Communist Party leaders, past or present, who are known to have

been involved in the activities of the Soviet secret police in our community, or who are declared to have had knowledge of such activities should be subjected to official examination and such judicial action as the facts may warrant.

“Budenz adds new and hitherto missing links to the chain of evidence presented during Jacson’s trial in Mexico, which showed him to be a Soviet police agent.” [20]

The *Militant* reported that Norman Thomas also asked the district attorney for an investigation into other murders believed to have been carried out in New York City by the Stalinists, including the 1937 disappearance of Juliet Stuart Poyntz, a prominent member of the Communist Party suspected of opposing the Stalinist terror, and anarchist leader Carlo Tresca, gunned down in 1943.

Thomas said:

“There are many others. The so-called ‘suicide’ of [Soviet defector Walter] Krivitsky in Washington—a phony if there ever was one! There is the murder of [defector] Ignace Reiss in Switzerland; the series of murders of Trotsky’s secretaries and members of his family. We think the situation is so grave that immediate action is imperative to halt these political murders.” [21]

The significance of Budenz’s revelations and the weight of his word as an accomplice compelled the District Attorney’s office to acknowledge “that the Budenz book could ‘provide many leads,’” the *Militant* wrote. [22]

The SWP expanded its campaign with the publication on May 3, 1947 of an article by Trotsky’s widow Natalia Sedova titled, “Stalin’s guilt—Budenz book supplies link to GPU murder of Trotsky.” [23]

Sedova wrote:

“Everything we said in connection with the violent death of L.D. Trotsky is today being wholly confirmed by the confessions of Louis Budenz, a former leader of the American ‘Communist’ Stalinist Party, in his book *This Is My Story* published in March of this year.” She added, “The confessions of Louis Budenz throw into the limelight the entire activity of the secret Stalinist ‘Apparatus’ which has usurped power and which acts with bloody arbitrariness.”

Sedova continued:

“The participation of the leaders of the ‘Communist’ party of the US in the plot against Trotsky, attested to by Louis Budenz, provides sufficient grounds to bring before the court, Budenz himself, together with Browder and Stachel, and to place them in the hands of the Mexican judicial authorities.” [24]

Within weeks of publishing Budenz’s revelations, the SWP campaign for a grand jury compelled the DA to call Budenz to testify. For the first time since Trotsky’s assassination, the SWP had caused a person with intimate knowledge of how the GPU murdered Trotsky to appear under oath in an American courtroom. The opportunity to expose the Stalinists’

crimes and shed light on their infiltration of the Trotskyist movement had never been closer.

But just as a real investigation appeared likely, an event occurred that led the SWP to abort its campaign, denounce Budenz as a liar and abandon further efforts to expose Stalinist agents inside the Trotskyist movement.

### **A visit from Max Shachtman and Albert Glotzer**

It had been seven years since Max Shachtman and Albert Glotzer split from the SWP to found the Workers Party when the two walked in to National Secretary James P. Cannon’s office at 116 University Place, New York, in May 1947. Despite their political differences with the SWP, both men had long histories in the Trotskyist movement, and they held a principled position toward sharing information related to questions of political security.

Shachtman and Glotzer brought shattering news. They told Cannon that they had received reliable information that implicated his personal secretary, Sylvia Callen, whose party name was Caldwell, as a GPU agent.

Shachtman and Glotzer affirmed that the source was reliable and had provided them with correct information in the past. The source informed Shachtman and Glotzer that the Stalinists had moved Callen from Chicago to New York in 1939 for the purposes of infiltrating Cannon’s office. Their source said Sylvia had been in a relationship with a young Stalinist from a Stalinist family whose father was a doctor.

### **The 1947 Control Commission**

Callen was, in the language of the day, Cannon’s “Girl Friday.” She handled all of his political and personal affairs. She organized Cannon’s schedule, had access to all party records, finances and international correspondence, and took dictation of his letters, memoranda and political reports. If Callen were an agent, it meant the security of the SWP and the Fourth International had been severely compromised by the GPU. All important information that crossed Cannon’s desk had been read by the GPU and transmitted to the Kremlin, including details of Trotsky’s security in Coyoacan.

Alongside the evidence of Callen’s role, Shachtman and Glotzer also informed Cannon that their source stated there was an FBI agent in the party leadership.

On May 26, 1947, Cannon convened a meeting of the Control Commission, the party organization responsible for internal investigations. The ICFI has accessed the minutes of the May 26, 1947 and subsequent commission meetings in the Hoover Institute at Stanford University, and publishes them here for the first time:

Meeting of Control Commission, May 26, 1947.

Report by Martin [Cannon]:

For several years the WP has been sending us reports that they have information which would indicate that the FBI had an agent in our party, high in the leadership. They claimed that their source of information had proven correct in several instances and that they believed this source was reliable.

Recently Shachtman and Gould [Glotzer] talked with Cannon and told him that the same source has informed them as follows:

The Stalinists have a woman in the SWP and that her name is S. She came from Chicago in 1939 and that she worked there in a doctor's office.

She has or had a boy friend whose name is Irving.

Gould insisted that she came from the YCL.

This information pointed to Comrade S.

MOTION: That the case be thoroughly investigated by the Control Commission.

That we have a session with S. to get her biographical story and then call in Shachtman and Gould.

Carried.

First meeting with S. set for Thurs. evening May 29, 1947.

Three days later, on May 29, Callen appeared before the Commission. The facts relating to her background largely substantiated the information provided by Shachtman and Glotzer. It was quickly established that Callen had concealed critical aspects of her personal and political background and associations, including the fact that she was married and that her husband, Zalmond Franklin, was a leading Stalinist from a prominent Communist Party family in Wisconsin.

The May 29 meeting minutes read as follows:

Case of Comrade S.

May 29, 1947.

In response to questions put to her by members of the Secretariat and Control Commission in combined session, the following biographical sketch was given:

My father's name is John Callen. He has been a salesman for many years. Neither he nor any other member of my family entertain or ever entertained any political views other than the average citizen.

I myself did not know that there was such a thing as a radical movement until I was about 19, at college. I lived in Milwaukee until about 1932. I went to Madison, Wisc. to attend the University of Wisconsin. I met Zalmond Franklin and we got married in February 1935. We were together on and off for about a year. I graduated June 1935 and left school. Franklin remained at school. After graduating I looked for work and finally found a job in a Milwaukee drug store and worked there for a while as sales clerk.

In the Fall of 1935 or Spring of 1936 I went to Chicago to live with my folks. There I entered the Chicago University to study social service. I went to school there for four quarters, working one summer for the Jewish Social Service outfit there, and then went to work for the Chicago Relief Administration where I worked until I came to New York.

In the summer of 1937 I joined a YPSL [Young Peoples' Socialist League—the youth movement of the Socialist Party, within which the SWP conducted its activity at the time] circle in Chicago.

I came to New York in May 1938 to go to work for the Hebrew Association for the Deaf. I worked part time there and helped out in the National Office of the SWP in spare time. In December 1939 [here there is a strike out over the "9" and a line to a margin correction which reads "1938"] I was asked to take a full-time job in the SWP National Office as the office secretary was leaving to take a job in industry.

On direct questioning of Cannon, the following answers were given:

My first contact with radicalism was at Wisconsin University where there was a group of the National Students' League. My

husband joined the League, 1935 semester, and I joined too just because he did. But I really didn't know what it was all about. I don't know whether the YCL [Young Communist League—the youth movement of the Stalinist Communist Party] had a fraction there at the time, but there was a radical group, bohemian types, of which my husband was one, and which was considered the "Communists" on the campus. I never knew whether my husband had any communist affiliations, but knew he was radical in his views and he may have been a member. I do know that his parents were either communists in ideology or just on the fringe of the Communist Party. They once gave a house party for the Friends of the Soviet Union.

Some years ago I heard that my former husband had been in Spain during the revolutionary days there. So I imagine he must have become a YCLer after our separation. Or he may very likely have been one before. I did not know enough then to be able to detect that and he never trusted me with any information about his activities.

"Did you ever belong to the YCL?"

No, never. I knew of the existence of such an organization but reacted against it emotionally because of the Bohemian character of the people around my husband who were considered 'communists'. But I did not really understand what communism was.

"How did you come to join the YPSL? Any member of your family interested in socialism?"

No, none of my family ever had or have now any radical views. I came to join the YPSL chiefly, I guess, because I was so lonely. I did not fit in with the friends of my family and I had no circle of my own. At the University in Madison, I got my first contact with radicalism and in a vague way I got to feel that socialism is a good thing. I heard Norman Thomas speak at the Socialist Club of the University of Chicago and he made a deep impression on me. I wanted to know more about socialism, so in my loneliness, I consulted the Chicago telephone directory for the address of some socialist organization, and found [sic] the Socialist Bookstore.

At the time I was working as a social worker in Chicago. The work I was doing, by the way, did not help me any. The patronizing attitude toward the poor was very distasteful to me. Well, so I went to the Socialist Party bookstore for some of their literature. There I met Lydia Beidel. She told me about the Young People's Socialist League in my neighborhood and invited me to attend. I went. They met at Belle's house. There I met a number of people. They seemed so different from the people I had known and made me feel so at home that I returned to a number of meetings and then joined the Circle. They were different from the other type of radicals I had known at college and I liked them as people. In the summer of 1937 I joined the YPSL circle on the North Side, Chicago.

Paul Picquet was the organizer of this circle. Most of the members of this circle were already Trotskyists. I came under their influence.

Several months after the Founding Convention of the Socialist Workers Party. [sic] I joined the party. The branch I joined had in it Goldman, Belle, Helen Judd, Shirley S, Irving Bern and all the other Landaus.

When I left for New York I was transferred. Here I was attached to the Village branch which met at Luttinger's. In this branch was Rose Karsner, Frieda Moore, Billie Ramloff.

"Did you ever work for a doctor in Chicago or Milwaukee?"

No, never. The only doctor I knew in those days was my husband's father. But I never worked for any doctor.

“Did you ever have a boy friend by the name of Irving?”

I may have casually known some student by that name, though I don't recall any. But I never had any close friend by that name.

Callen admitted that she had been a member of the Stalinist-aligned National Student League and that her husband, Zalmond Franklin, fought as a Stalinist in the Spanish Civil War and came from a Stalinist family. Until then, after eight years working in the national office, the SWP leaders had not known that Callen was married, let alone to a Stalinist. This was also the first time the party learned of her involvement with the Stalinist National Student League. But the SWP was grasping at straws when it claimed that Shachtman and Glotzer's reference to Callen's boyfriend 'Irving' undercut the source's assertions. Every other detail substantiated the source as well as Budenz's revelations.

The facts which Callen now revealed left no doubt that she had lied about her close connections with the Communist Party. But Zalmond Franklin was not merely a rank-and-file CP member or an innocent YCLer. Information that was readily available when the Control Commission convened showed Callen's husband was a prominent public representative of the Communist Party and a member of a leading Stalinist family.

Zalmond David Franklin (1909–1958), and his father, Samuel Nathan Franklin (1882–1958), both served in the Spanish Civil War. Samuel Franklin was a doctor who was elected County Coroner in Milwaukee in 1918 as a member of the Socialist Party. Long active in politics, Samuel Franklin led the Milwaukee Medical Bureau of the Stalinist-led North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy during the civil war. [25]

According to ship travel log records, the elder Franklin was in Spain with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade as a medical adviser from July 1937 to February 1938. [26] Callen herself admitted on May 29 that her husband's father was a doctor.

Zalmond Franklin was the second oldest of Samuel Franklin's three children. A University of Wisconsin bacteriology student, he served as an agent of the GPU in Spain from July 1937 to March 1938. His passport lists a Chicago address. [27] An article titled “Zalmond Franklin, ‘Somewhere in Spain’” in the October 11, 1937 edition of the *Wisconsin State Journal* makes reference to the young Stalinist:

“Zalmond Franklin, former University of Wisconsin student, is with his father, Dr. Samuel N. Franklin, Milwaukee, in an American base hospital ‘somewhere in Spain.’ Zalmond quit his bacteriology studies here early this year to go to Spain, and was followed by his father, head of the Milwaukee medical bureau of the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy.” [28]

In an article published in the *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle* on May 6, 1938, Zalmond Franklin was referred to as a well-known public speaker on behalf of the Stalinists and their crimes in Spain. The *Chronicle* article reads:

“Zalmond Franklin, graduate student of bacteriology, left the U. of Wis. Last June to serve the cause of democracy in republican Spain. He was in charge of all laboratory work in the four American hospitals in Spain. He left Spain this February, arriving in New York a month ago.

“At present he is touring the [middle] west telling of the terrific struggle in Spain and of his own unusual experiences. He will

speak at the Jewish Center, 1025 N. Milwaukee street, this Saturday, May 7, at 8 p.m.” [29]

When Callen admitted to hiding her marriage to this Stalinist, the SWP had enough information to know she was a spy. All the SWP had to do was investigate the Franklin family by picking up the telephone and calling the Milwaukee branch or by inquiring with Harry Milton, an SWP member who fought in Spain with the Workers Party of Marxist Unity (POUM) while the Franklins were also present. Readily available reports in the local newspapers would also have shown the Franklins' roles as high-profile Communist Party figures. Callen provided the SWP with information that left no doubt about who she really was.

But when the party control commission met for the last time a week later on June 5, 1947, it covered up the evidence of Callen's marriage to Zalmond Franklin. A stenographic report of the meeting, titled “Case of Comrade S.,” is published in full:

Case of Comrade S.

June 5, 1947.

Joint meeting of Control Comm. and Secretariat.

PURPOSE of meeting: To hear a report from WP members about rumors concerning comrade S which came to their attention.

Report by Shachtman: “About one, two or three weeks after Budenz's book, THIS IS MY STORY came out, a reliable friend of ours came and told me that an FBI agent called on him to get some information. In the course of the conversation the FBI man told our friend Jones that the Stalinists have an agent in the SWP. He then asked if Jones knew a certain “S” in the SWP who came from Chicago in 1939, got a job in the office of the SWP and then became private secretary to Cannon. In Chicago she worked for a doctor. She had a Stalinist boy friend by the name of Irving.”

The WP comrades were then told of “S”'s biographical sketch as it was given to us by her.

Comrade G of the WP then told of the first time he met “S” at a membership meeting in Chicago in the NW side, about 1937.

The WP members assured us they had not talked to anyone about the matter and would not do so. They agreed there was nothing in the information they had except the statement of an FBI man, but felt duty-bound to report the matter to us.

Cannon pointed out that the only facts upon which the FBI man based the conclusion that she is a Stalinist agent in the SWP were:

- 1 - That comrade S came to New York from Chicago in 1939.
- 2 - That she had worked for a doctor in Chicago
- 3 - That she got a job as stenographer in the office of the SWP and later became Cannon's private secretary.
- 4 - That she had or has a boy friend named Irving.

Discussion followed and the general consensus of opinion was that the above points did not constitute any facts upon which to base any credence in the rumor or further action.

After the WP members left the discussion was continued and the following motion was made and carried:

MOTION: That there is no basis for suspicion of comrade S in the statements of the FBI man and that we so notify comrade S.

That we make no mention of the case to anyone and ask the WP comrades not to speak of it either.

That we watch for evidence of any gossip about this matter and in the event that such gossip develops we act promptly according to the circumstances dictated by the new developments.

Rose Karsner

Control Commission

The SWP response was a dishonest cover-up. Shachtman and Glotzer had provided the Control Commission with clear and actionable facts. The publicly available information about the Franklin family's role as public advocates for Stalinism proved definitively that Sylvia Callen had lied about her ties to the Communist Party.

The SWP would have been entirely within their rights to demand a grand jury investigation into Callen's role just as they had demanded with Louis Budenz. On June 5, 1947, the *same day* of the second SWP Control Commission meeting, Budenz finally appeared before a grand jury in New York. The SWP had been in regular contact with the Manhattan District Attorney whom they had met to deliver petitions demanding a grand jury indictment. Now, the SWP had proof that the GPU had infiltrated the party leadership with an agent who had access to high-level internal material. This was a major breakthrough in the case to expose GPU infiltration of the Trotskyist movement.

But the SWP did nothing to investigate Callen's role. They should have expelled Callen for lying and concealing her background. They should have made this information public, adding to the Budenz revelations and the hemorrhaging of information relating to the GPU's infiltration of the SWP and its role in orchestrating the assassination of Leon Trotsky. Instead, they let her go and passed a motion "that we make no mention of the case to anyone and ask the WP comrades [Shachtman and Glotzer] not to speak of it either." The control commission resolved, "in the event that such gossip develops we act promptly according to the circumstances dictated by the new developments." Cannon's wife and Callen's good friend, Rose Karsner, was the sole signatory on the June 5 stenographic report.

By withholding this crucial information, the SWP was obstructing the very investigation they had demanded in the first place.

Budenz's exposure of Callen was, without question, a devastating political and personal blow to Cannon. He would have immediately recognized the political implications of Callen's treachery. The security of the SWP had been fatally compromised. Callen had access to the party's documents, records, and international correspondence. Cannon was confronted with a nightmare that was all too real. Nevertheless, Cannon and the Control Commission had an inescapable political obligation to get to the truth of the matter. Instead, acting in a manner for which there could be no justification, they decided to organize a cover-up of Callen's role as a Stalinist spy.

Callen left the movement immediately after the SWP control commission and moved out of New York. Her sudden disappearance was neither reported nor explained to the membership. Moreover, Budenz's appearance before the grand jury was barely noted in the *Militant*; the SWP soon dropped its coverage of the Budenz revelations altogether.

### **Budenz's *Men Without Faces* and the House Un-American Activities Committee**

In 1950, Louis Budenz published a second book, *Men Without Faces*, which provided an even more detailed description of the agent who had infiltrated the national headquarters of the SWP.

Budenz wrote: "Just before I went out to Chicago in 1937 to become editor of *Midwest Daily Record* I had been instructed by Roberts [Dr. Gregory Rabinowitz, the GPU spy leader] to find a comrade who was engaged in penetrating the Trotskyite organization there." [30]

Though employing the pseudonym "Helen" in place of the spy's real first name, Sylvia, Budenz's biographical sketch left no doubt that he was telling the story of the GPU's recruitment of Sylvia Callen and her successful infiltration into the SWP's national headquarters.

"From out of the ranks of the Chicago YCL there came a young couple whom we shall call Helen and Irving." The two "were assigned to dangerous secret work. Helen, being quiet and inconspicuous, was assigned to penetrate the Trotskyite groups. Irving, who went to Spain as a member of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, was used as a special agent, under Steve Nelson and the forbidding George Mink, to detect and eliminate 'enemies of the party.'" [31]

"Helen had been instructed to move to New York, in order to penetrate the Trotskyites on a national scale," Budenz continued. "I was then in Chicago, and it was I who had arranged this transfer, on the orders of the Soviet secret police representative with whom I was working and who was known to me only as 'Roberts.'" [31]

Budenz described his first meeting with Callen.

"Our first conference was at [YCL Chicago leader Jack] Kling's house out on the West Side of Chicago. With curtains drawn so that no one could see who was there, we arranged the ways and means by which I could get in touch with her. She expressed an eagerness to work on a wider scale for the party among the Trotskyites and, before she knew what the mission involved, gladly volunteered her services." [32]

Budenz was impressed by Helen-Sylvia's "soft voice and conservative dress, which suited her position as a social worker, enhanced her skill as an underground agent." Budenz "arranged to meet her privately at different places in South Chicago, where much of her social work was done." He convinced her to move to New York "when I had satisfied myself about her loyalty and capability." [33]

Budenz explained that Rabinowitz provided Callen with "\$300 in cash to cover her first-class fare to New York and her initial expenses there. He then told her how she was to proceed. She would have an apartment in mid-Manhattan; and arrangements had been made for her apparent employment by a woman doctor who was a trusted party member. This would explain her regular income and also her regular hours. She could then volunteer to do stenographic and other clerical work at the Trotskyite national headquarters on University Place and 13th street." [34]

Certain conditions were set. "It was to be an unspeakable rule that Irving was never, for any reason, to go to her apartment; nor were they ever to be seen together in public." [35]. The Stalinists were aware of Zalmond Franklin's public profile and his family's widely-known role as leaders of the Communist Party in Milwaukee. They knew that if the SWP discovered Callen's husband's identity, her role as a GPU spy would be exposed. Callen observed this rule, and concealed her marriage from the SWP.

"The arrangements went through at top speed: Helen departed for New York and Irving soon was located in the Bronx. And Helen so ingratiated herself with the leading Trotskyites that she became a close friend of James Cannon, American Trotskyite chief, and his wife Karsner. She had the full run of the Trotskyite offices, became Cannon's secretary and made available to the Soviet secret police all the correspondence with Trotsky in Mexico City and with other Trotskyites throughout the world." [36]

## Callen dictates the SWP's response to *Men Without Faces*

Budenz's account of Callen's activity in *Men Without Faces* was detailed and irrefutable. Nevertheless, the SWP leaders sought to maintain the public pretense that Callen had been a devoted and hardworking comrade.

But the pressure to come up with a response to Budenz was overwhelming. In August 1950, the Party leaders dispatched Farrell Dobbs to meet Callen at her home in Chicago to ask her how the party should reply.

In an August 21 letter to Cannon, Dobbs reported on his meeting with Callen. He wrote:

Chicago, Ill.

August 21, 1950

Dear Jim,

I have seen S. When I showed her the passage in the Budenz book and told her of the Shachtmanite prattle she reacted with mingled anger against her detractors and anxiety for her family.

She told me the FBI has been hounding her and her family. As a result her father almost lost his job and was told that if there is any more investigating he will be fired. The FBI tried to question her about the party but she refused to give them any information.

Her family now knows the whole score and they have put heavy pressure on her to keep her away from the movement.

She does not want to be involved either directly or indirectly in the matter of a reply to Budenz. I asked if she would be willing to sit down with Mike and me to help us gather some of the facts needed to refute Budenz which would be used without openly or directly involving her. She said she did not want to be drawn into the thing in any manner whatever.

I told her that we considered it absolutely necessary to reply to Budenz charges. She asked if we couldn't just issue a statement announcing that a full investigation of his allegations was made three years ago which proved his story false and denounce him as a character assassin. She asked if the statement couldn't be general, i.e., not refer to any specific person in refuting him, but state that no such person as he describes has ever been in the party office.

She appeared to be in good health, seemed pleased to see me, and asked about everyone. She had not heard about Oscar [Coover, a longtime leader of the SWP who died earlier that year.]

So far as I can see there is no point in attempting to press her any further on this matter. It seems best to go ahead along the lines we agreed on when we discussed the question in the secretariat right after the last plenum.

(signed) Farrell

The SWP sent Dobbs to meet Callen because they wanted to know whether she had spoken to the FBI about the party and its leadership. The bizarre, Dostoevskyan quality of the letter is a product of the fact that the SWP was going along with a story they had created which they knew to be a lie. By preventing any investigation into Callen's ties to the Communist Party and by calling Budenz's revelations and Shachtman and Glotzer's warnings "rumors" and "gossip," they created a false narrative that they felt they had to maintain.

Callen brazenly told the SWP how they should respond to Budenz's revelations. She instructed Dobbs to simply deny the existence of anyone

who fit "Helen's" description, and to cite the 1947 Control Commission as proof that the allegations against her were baseless. The SWP leaders, in a decision that was as cowardly as it was duplicitous, acceded to Callen's instructions.

One week after Dobbs' letter, on August 28, 1950, Cannon published an article in the *Militant* acknowledging that the party had received a report of a possible GPU agent in the national headquarters. Calling Budenz a "well-known professional perjurer," Cannon wrote that the references to "Helen" in *Men Without Faces* were false.

This story, published by Budenz for the first time in the middle of the year 1950, has been known to us for more than three years. In 1947, we received a 'tip' purportedly emanating in the first instance from circles close to the FBI, that one of the secretarial workers in the National Office, who was identified by name and specifically by previous occupation and biographical details, was an agent of the Stalinists." [37]

Mischaracterizing Callen's role as a mere "secretarial worker" and not as his personal secretary, Cannon claimed that "this report was promptly handed over to the party Control Commission for investigation according to the established principles of the revolutionary workers' movement" and that the investigation "established that the 'information' given to identify the accused comrade as to her biography, her previous occupation, and her personal life, was false. It was evident to us then that the accusation was based either on mistaken identity, or was a deliberately planted story designed to create a spy-scare in the organization." [38]

This account was a lie from beginning to end. The Control Commission covered up the fact that the testimony corroborated the report from Shachtman and Glotzer's source and that she lied about being married to a leading Stalinist. It concluded by swearing those present to secrecy and was signed by the accused's close personal friend, Rose Karsner. Far from proving the source's information was false, the Control Commission hearings confirmed she had moved to Chicago in 1939 and uncovered that she had not told the party she had been married to a Stalinist and had been in the Stalinist youth movement. She left the SWP as soon as her cover was blown. Under the circumstances there was no innocent explanation.

Following Callen's instructions, Cannon added that Budenz's allegations "do not apply to this particular person or to anyone else who ever worked in the National Office of the Socialist Workers Party." He said, falsely, that "the Control Commission rejected the accusation and exonerated the accused comrade, who had fully cooperated with the investigation, answered all questions put to her and supplied the Control Commission with all the data relating to her biography and previous occupations, which were subjected to verification." [39]

In fact, none of Callen's claims had been verified nor had there been any real investigation. From the initial visit of Shachtman and Glotzer to the issuing of the Control Commission's findings, little more than two weeks had elapsed. Callen had not cooperated with the SWP.

Budenz was not through with his exposure of Callen. On November 11, 1950, Budenz submitted an affidavit to the House Un-American Activities Committee that included new details of Sylvia Callen-Caldwell's role. This time, Budenz dispensed with the use of the fictional name "Helen."

"Another person whom I introduced to Roberts," Budenz testified, referencing the alias for Dr. Gregory Rabinowitz "was Sylvia Caulwell [sic] and whose maiden name was something like Sylvia Kallen [sic].

"Her husband, Irving Franklin, had been in Spain working in

secret work and had been sent to Canada to aid in espionage activities there...Sylvia under the direction of Roberts-Rabinowitz, gradually made herself indispensable to James Cannon, then head of the American Trotskyites. She became his secretary and served in that capacity for some time. Roberts-Rabinowitz advised me that she had proved to be invaluable.” [40]

The SWP did not respond to this testimony.

### Joseph Hansen and the SWP cover-up

Over the next years, the evidence against Franklin mounted and the SWP continued to defend her along the lines Franklin laid out in her meeting with Dobbs, repeated in Cannon’s article of August 28, 1950.

In 1954 and again in 1958, Franklin testified before federal grand juries investigating Soviet espionage in the US. In her first appearance, Franklin relied on her Fifth Amendment right to remain silent. In 1958, however, she admitted that she was, in fact, a GPU agent. This testimony would not be known for another 25 years.

In 1959, however, the journalist Isaac Don Levine published an account of Ramon Mercader and the GPU’s assassination of Trotsky, *The Mind of An Assassin*, that substantiated Budenz’s testimony.

Levine wrote:

“He [Budenz] made it possible for the NKVD [the GPU] to steam open and pilfer Trotsky’s mail to his New York followers. He got a Communist Party girl, a Chicago social worker, to move to New York and volunteer her services to James Cannon, the American Trotskyist leader: ‘She had the full run of the mill of the Trotskyite offices, became Cannon’s Secretary, and made available to the Soviet secret police all the correspondence with Trotsky in Mexico City and with other Trotskyites throughout the world,’ he testified.” [41]

SWP leader Joseph Hansen tried to convince Levine to drop the matter. Hansen had joined the SWP in the mid 1930s and served in Coyoacan, where he provided secretarial assistance and security for Trotsky. In fact, he was the second man to reach Trotsky—captain of the guard Harold Robins was the first—after Mercader struck the fatal blow. Hansen wrote to Cannon on October 24, 1958 about a discussion he had with Levine about the latter’s book:

“What he wanted from me was information on any spies or evidence of spies in Soviet pay working in or around our movement. Not having any such information, I could not help him; in fact, when he came to Sylvia Caldwell I hope I was able to give him some further considerations to help squelch that rumor.” [42]

On March 19, 1960, Hansen responded to an urgent note from Gerry Healy, then National Secretary of the Socialist Labour League, the British section of the International Committee of the Fourth International. Healy inquired from Hansen what the latter knew about a report in Levine’s book regarding another GPU agent, named “Etienne,” the party name of Mark Zborowski, the Paris-based GPU agent who played a central role in

providing the Stalinist secret police with information that led to the murders of Trotsky’s son Lev Sedov, Trotsky’s political secretaries Erwin Wolf and Rudolf Klement, and GPU defector Ignatz Reiss, who left the Soviet Union to join the Fourth International.

Referencing his own review of Levine’s book, Hansen attempted to deflect Healy’s interest in Etienne, claiming the SWP could not spare anyone to attend Etienne-Zborowski’s 1958 perjury trial, where the agent was sentenced to prison for lying under oath about his ties to Jack Soble, a GPU controller responsible for a network of agents in the United States. In reality, Hansen and the SWP had no interest in covering a trial that could expose details of GPU infiltration of the Fourth International.

Hansen said he “decided not to give much space to the Etienne case” in his review of *The Mind of An Assassin* because, in his words, Levine was an anti-communist. Hansen said he considered referencing “the report about Cannon’s personal secretary being a GPU agent” as an example of Levine’s false material, adding, “But this would necessitate an article on our investigation years ago of the slander and the review would have been thrown out of balance.”

Hansen continued, “One of our primary concerns was not to give the slightest encouragement to the view Levine seeks to implant—that our organizations are loaded with spies. Such a view is deadly poisonous and can do incomparably greater harm than the occasional stool pigeon that turns up in any organization.” [43]

Weeks later, in April 1960, Cannon wrote a letter from Los Angeles to his wife, Rose Karsner, which is published here for the first time. In a discouraged tone, Cannon wrote:

“I haven’t felt like writing but I am sending this note so that you won’t worry about something possibly being wrong. Spiritually I am tired and have no present ambition to do anything. I spend the time reading stuff that is easy to read, thinking a little, but mostly musing and remembering and reflecting. Most of my musing and remembering these days is sad, and that paralyzes the will to work or even to plan to work later on.

“The memories of work I have already done in the past—not speaking and writing, which was the easiest part and probably all that others really noticed, but carrying people on my back—give me a delayed reaction of spiritual weariness. I feel that I have done all of that heavy work I can do or even want to do again for anybody...

“I don’t want to do anything for anybody—in fact, I can’t—and I don’t want anybody to try to do anything for me except for routine technical things. The most I want from people now is to let me alone, not pull at me or try to push me, and above all not expect me [to] pick them up and inspire them and try to solve their problems.” [44]

That same year Sylvia Callen was named as an unindicted co-conspirator in the indictment of GPU spy Robert Soblen, Jack Soble’s brother. At Soblen’s trial, further information proving Callen’s role emerged. Soble testified, “I went further into the Trotsky field and worked with the secretary of Cannon, Sylvia...also introduced to me by the same Russians who worked for them already before...She gathered material at the secretariat of Cannon and gave it to me...pure Trotsky material.” [45]

The SWP again failed to cover the trial and report on this testimony. The absence of any coverage by the *Militant* of the Soblen trial—which was front page news in *The New York Times*—is all the more incriminating given the fact that another prominent ex-member of the SWP, Floyd Cleveland Miller, was also listed as a GPU co-conspirator.

The cover-up of Callen’s role as a GPU agent became the official policy of the SWP leadership. In a manner that defies innocent explanation, the



SWP went out of its way to uphold her bona fides, perpetuating the myth of Cannon's selfless secretary and denouncing Budenz as a perjurer.

On November 12, 1966, Cannon wrote to Reba Hansen, Joseph Hansen's wife, regarding a proposal by a party member to change the functioning of the SWP's Control Commission. He addressed the matter in a thoroughly dishonest way.

Cannon explained that the party's Control Commission was responsible for the "double purpose" of maintaining party security and "to provide the maximum assurance that any individual party member, accused or rumored to be unworthy of party membership, could be assured of the fullest investigation." [46]

To defend his position, Cannon cited the case of Callen-Caldwell without identifying her by name. He said that at the time, "a rumor circulated by the Shachtmanites and others outside the party against the integrity of a National Office secretarial worker was thoroughly investigated by the Control Commission which, after taking stenographic testimony from all available sources, declared the rumors unfounded and cleared the accused party member to continue her work." [47]

This letter to Reba Hansen had clearly been written for public consumption, with the purpose of suppressing questions about the official story, particularly among older members of the SWP who must have wondered why Sylvia Callen had suddenly left the party.

Cannon's letter neglected to explain that Callen-Caldwell was not simply "a National Office secretarial worker," but his personal secretary, assistant and his wife's close friend. He hid the fact that she quit the party shortly after supposedly being cleared "to continue her work." The 1947 control commission did not investigate the matter "thoroughly" and it did not take testimony "from all available sources," as he claimed. Her lies were exposed by Budenz, Levine and Soble, and the SWP control commission covered up her real role.

### **The SWP defends Hansen and Franklin**

In 1975, the International Committee initiated its own investigation into *Security and the Fourth International*. The initial findings included evidence of Hansen's meetings with the FBI and State Department as well as information of Callen's role as a GPU agent.

Hansen denounced the revelations as "A Geyser of Mud." He wrote that "the Healyites in no place indicate the basis of their charge that the agent with whom he had met, Robert McGregor, was in association with an agent of the FBI." [48]

Hansen rejected the ICFI's call for a commission of inquiry into Trotsky's assassination, adding:

"Sylvia Caldwell, (that was her party name) worked very hard in her rather difficult assignment of managing the office of the Socialist Workers Party, which included helping Cannon in a secretarial capacity. In fact all the comrades who shared these often irksome chores with her regarded her as exemplary. They burned as much as she did over the foul slanders spread by Budenz." [49]

In the December 8, 1975 edition of the SWP magazine *Intercontinental Press*, leading SWP member George Novack attacked Healy's "reckless and indiscriminate allegations" against "Sylvia Caldwell, Cannon's secretary," writing that "anything goes in his frantic endeavors to cast a net of suspicion around Joseph Hansen and his colleagues." [50]

In early 1976, the SWP published a collection of essays memorializing the life of James P. Cannon, who had died in August 1974. Titled *James P. Cannon As We Knew Him*, the volume consisted of essays written by SWP members, including one by Joseph Hansen's wife, Reba Hansen, which contained the following extraordinary tribute:

"During those years Sylvia Caldwell served as secretary in the national office, a job that included working with Jim, who held the post of national secretary. She was the second full-time secretary the party had. The first was Lillian Roberts.

"Jim often told us about how it was 'in the old days', when it was difficult to get things done because of having no secretarial help. He said he was grateful for any help he could get and he never failed to show his deep appreciation for the aid that Sylvia gave.

"Jim was fond of telling the story about how Sylvia went to a business school to learn shorthand when it was proposed she work in the national office. This was before the days of the tape recorder, and shorthand was essential to taking adequate minutes at meetings and dictation for letters and articles. Sylvia learned fast and well. Her Gregg characters were like copper-plate engravings, her typing without strike-overs, and no messy erasures.

"When the load in the national office was heavy and Sylvia needed help, I gave her a hand, working very closely with her. Her efficiency impressed me. She knew how to do everything that was necessary to keep a one-person office running smoothly. Her devotion to the movement and her readiness to put in long hours of hard work inspired us all.

"Sylvia and I became close collaborators and good personal friends. She was a warm human being.

"When Sylvia left New York in 1947 because of family obligations, Jim asked me to take her place in the national office. Since this included working closely with Jim, I felt a little nervous, but Sylvia helped me through the transition from business manager of the *Militant* to my new assignment.

"At that time Rose and Jim lived at 126 West Eleventh Street, seventh floor. The apartment building was modern—it had an elevator—and the rooms were large by New York standards. The front room, facing on Eleventh Street, was big enough for two desks, several filing cabinets, and a worktable. Sylvia took me there to work with her and learn the ropes.

"But Jim didn't shift easily from one secretary to another. And it was only after Sylvia had been gone some time that Jim felt enough at home with me through working together in the national office to ask me to come over to West Eleventh Street." [51]

There is no innocent explanation for the inclusion of this lying tribute to Sylvia Callen in a book that was supposedly intended to eulogize Cannon. Reba Hansen knew full well that Callen had suddenly disappeared from the SWP national office in 1947 not because of "family obligations," but because she had been exposed as a GPU agent. Her gratuitous tribute to Cannon's secretary, who had for nearly a decade managed the national office, did not make any mention whatever of the allegations made by Budenz, the 1947 control commission, Budenz's more detailed account in 1950 of Callen's activities, or of her being named by the US government as a co-conspirator in the 1960 trial of Soviet agent Robert Soblen.

### **The ICFI Locates Sylvia Callen**

The SWP's defense of Callen made it critical to locate the former agent. In 1976, the Workers League (predecessor of the Socialist Equality Party), initiated a search to find Callen. Without the benefit of modern-day search engines, it was necessary to reconstruct the biography of this dedicated and ruthless American GPU agent who was able to spy on and betray without remorse people with whom she worked on a daily basis for almost a decade. She was absolutely indifferent to the human impact, which included murder, of her actions.

In order to locate Callen it was necessary to discover the name under which she was living. The November 1960 federal indictment that named her as a co-conspirator in the GPU spy ring led by Robert Soblen and Jack Soble identified her only by her maiden name, Callen. However, through an examination of court documents, David North, the national secretary of the Workers League, was able to ascertain that Callen had been living in Wheaton, Illinois, at the time of her indictment.

Callen left Wheaton shortly after the conclusion of the Soblen trial. But there was a paper trail that could be followed. In the early 1950s Callen had divorced her husband and co-GPU agent, Zalmond Franklin, who died in 1958. Callen married her second husband, James Doxsee, a member or fellow-traveler of the Communist Party who worked for ABC. Together they had three children, whom they raised in Wheaton. Her pleasant middle-class life was disturbed only by visits from the FBI and two extensive federal grand jury interrogations, the first in 1954 and the second in 1958.

After selling their home in Wheaton, James and Sylvia Doxsee relocated to a nearby West Chicago suburb. The domesticated Mrs. Doxsee was careful to conceal her past, refusing to allow her family and few friends to take pictures of her. In the mid-1970s, the Doxsees sold their home and purchased an RV, which became their mobile residence. Much of their time was spent driving through Central America.

However, in May 1977 the Doxsees returned to Wheaton to visit James' aging mother. North had been able to establish Callen's new married name. He learned in advance of the Doxsees' planned visit to Wheaton, where they had reserved a space for their RV in a local trailer park. He and Alex Mitchell, who was then the editor of the *News Line*, the publication of the Workers Revolutionary Party (British section of the International Committee), located Sylvia Callen-Franklin-Caldwell-Doxsee at this trailer park in Wheaton.

On May 9, 1977, North and Mitchell went to the Doxsee's trailer and confronted the ex-GPU spy.

When asked about her political past, Doxsee (aka Callen, Caldwell, Franklin) acknowledged working as Cannon's secretary, but sought to brush aside her years in the SWP as a minor episode in her life. As the *Bulletin*, newspaper of the Workers League, reported on May 31, 1977, Doxsee said: "I don't see why it's even important. I was never really in politics. I never read. I never understood it. I was just an immature child, that's about all I can say... It's like I blacked it out. All that period of my life." [52]

Regarding James P. Cannon, with whom she had closely worked on a day-by-day basis for almost a decade, Doxsee said with unconcealed contempt, "He wasn't an important man, in my opinion. Is he? What part did he play in the world?"

Pressed by North and Mitchell to explain why she was indicted as a co-conspirator in a GPU spy ring, Doxsee feigned amnesia. The following exchange was reported in the *Bulletin*:

Question: This is an official document. Grand Jury, 1960, in which your name is mentioned right here, Sylvia Callen.

Franklin: Grand Jury charges!

Question: Yes. All I would like to ask you is why were you named on this indictment? That's all I'd like to ask you.

Franklin: I can't believe it!

*Another document was shown to her.*

Question: Here as well is your name on the list of witnesses the Government was going to call.

Franklin: My God!

Question: You have no explanation for your name.

Franklin: No, but the FBI came to see me here.

Question: Why did they come to see you?

Franklin: I don't know. I had a mental breakdown afterwards so it must have been pretty terrible.

Question: So why...

Franklin: I don't know. I don't know. I don't want to think about it.

Question: Do you have a memory block which begins after all these events supposedly took place?

Franklin: I don't know. I wish you wouldn't try to make me remember because I'll have a breakdown. I can't remember. It's been many years, and I've put it out of my mind.

Question: Is it possible that you were in the Communist Party and simply have forgotten all about it?

Franklin: I don't know. I don't know. It could be one way. It could be the other. I can't believe that person was me. I can't believe that I worked in that office. That I was his secretary. I can't believe anything. [53]

After the publication of the interview with Sylvia Doxsee-Franklin-Caldwell-Callen on May 31, 1977, Hansen responded in an *Intercontinental Press* article on June 20, 1977 titled "Healyites Escalate Frame-up of Trotskyist Leaders." In the article, Hansen attempted to cast doubt on what he called the "purported" interview, stating that the ICFI had "escalated their slanders on the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party." [54]

Hansen attacked the *Security and the Fourth International* investigation by referencing the 1947 Control Commission:

"The members of this select body of witch-hunters [i.e. the ICFI] commit themselves to a slander they had previously only hinted at; namely, that the control commission set up by the Socialist Workers Party in 1947 to examine the rumours circulating about Caldwell was 'rigged.'"

He continued:

"If there was a cover-up, if the control commission was rigged, if no control commission was held at all—as the Healyites now allege—then the main guilt clearly falls on James P. Cannon, one of the founders of the Fourth International. In accordance with the logic of the Big Lie as practiced by the Healyites, Cannon must be listed as an 'accomplice of the GPU,' if not worse.

"This is only the beginning. If Cannon was an 'accomplice' or 'agent' of the GPU, then the entire top leadership of the SWP associated with him must be similarly listed, for they obviously participated in staging the alleged control commission fraud, whether by helping to rig it or, if it was not held at all, by making out—along with Cannon—that it had been held.

"How far back did such fraudulent practices go? Was Cannon an accomplice or agent of the GPU when he founded American Trotskyism? When he collaborated with Trotsky in founding the

Fourth International? Was his long battle against Stalinism a sham? Were his close relations with Trotsky a cover up for a secret connection with Stalin? Just whom did Cannon use as willing tools in working for the GPU—for instance, in the alleged fake control commission?” [55]

On June 25, 1977, North, in an article published in the *News Line* responded to Hansen’s claims in an article titled “Hansen’s Big Lie Grows Bigger.” After quoting the above paragraphs, North wrote:

“All this comes straight from the pen of Joseph Hansen! He is charged with covering up the activities of GPU agents, and so he replies by trying to frighten SWP members with the suggestion that his guilt makes Cannon a Stalinist agent! He is trying to intimidate the SWP membership and bully them into silence by telling them how terrible the consequences will be if the International Committee’s charges against him are proven correct.

“Hansen deals with his members like an airplane hijacker with a bomb in his hand who waves it above his head and shouts at the passengers ‘Anyone tries to stop me and we’ll all be blown to kingdom come!’

“What is clear is that Hansen will stop at nothing to save his own political neck. Hansen is not protecting Cannon; he’s using Cannon; he’s using Cannon to save himself.” [56]

The fact that Hansen resorted to this desperate method precisely on the question of the 1947 Control Commission shows just how central it was to Hansen’s “narrative.” As North wrote:

“This is Hansen at his tricks again. He doesn’t give a straightforward answer: was the SWP control commission rigged or wasn’t it? Instead, he drags in James P. Cannon in order to hide behind his grave. Why doesn’t he leave Cannon out of it? The International Committee has made no accusations against Cannon. We’ve accused Hansen! It’s Hansen’s favourite trick to immediately conjure up Cannon’s Ghost the moment he himself is challenged.” [57]

The publication of the ICFI’s interview with Sylvia Callen-Doxsee and the calling into question of the 1947 Control Commission produced anxiety among the SWP leadership and the Stalinist bureaucracy. Those involved in penetrating the Trotskyist movement had good reason to believe the *Security and the Fourth International* investigation would publish further revelations exposing the GPU infiltration of the Trotskyist movement.

Hansen responded by adopting the methods of Stalinist intimidation, attempting to create a threatening atmosphere of provocation against the ICFI. Unable to challenge the damning implications of the Callen interview, Hansen wrote, “The Healyites are quite capable of initiating physical violence against other sectors of the labor movement.” In the same article, he threatened the International Committee, warning it that *Security and the Fourth International* would bring “deadly consequences.” [58]

Less than four months later, on October 16, 1977, Tom Henehan, a 26-year-old member of the Workers League Political Committee, was assassinated in New York City by two professional gunmen while supervising a public party event. Though the killers were quickly

identified, the New York police refused to make any arrests. Finally, after a three-year campaign waged by the Workers League, the gunmen were arrested, placed on trial, and convicted in July 1981 of second-degree murder. Following the trial, the private detective who had investigated the case for the defense attorney informed North that “the word on the street” was that the killing was a “hit.”

### **The Gelfand case and the Franklin grand jury transcripts**

In August 1977, Alan Gelfand, an SWP member and a public defender in Los Angeles, obtained copies of the *Security and the Fourth International* documents circulated by Workers League members outside the SWP’s National Convention in Oberlin, Ohio. [59]

Gelfand asked other SWP members about the documents and particularly the 1940 State Department and FBI memos that referenced Hansen’s meeting with the GPU and with the US government.

In response, Gelfand was given different explanations. Some SWP members told him the documents were forgeries, either by the Workers League or the FBI. Others, including SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes, told Gelfand the documents were legitimate but that the SWP had instructed Hansen to contact US government agencies to obtain information about Trotsky’s assassination. SWP leaders also claimed that all the allegations made by the International Committee had been fully answered in a party internal bulletin that was provocatively titled, “Healy’s Big Lie.”

After the convention, Gelfand carefully studied this internal bulletin and concluded that the answers were contradicted by documents uncovered by the *Security and the Fourth International* investigation after its publication.

Gelfand continued to ask for discussion regarding Hansen’s connections to the GPU and United States agencies, and of Callen’s connections to the GPU. The SWP leadership repeatedly barred him from speaking to other members about his concerns. Gelfand realized that the cover-up must be tied to the activity of high level state agents still operating within the party.

In December 1978, Gelfand filed an amicus curiae brief in support of a lawsuit by the SWP related to the FBI’s surveillance of the movement through COINTELPRO. This lawsuit, which had been initiated by the SWP primarily as a fundraising activity, was not being conducted with the intention of exposing past or still active agents inside the party. In fact, the US government eventually settled the case by paying the SWP hundreds of thousands of dollars but without identifying a single agent that it had infiltrated into the party. In the course of the trial, the FBI admitted that between 1960 and 1976 there were 300 informants serving as members of the SWP.

Gelfand’s brief, however, referenced the history of FBI and GPU penetration of the movement, and the recent revelations concerning Callen and Hansen to further demonstrate the need for the court to compel the government to identify the agents that had been sent into the SWP.

This demand outraged the SWP leadership, which accused Gelfand of violating party discipline. On January 5, 1979, SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes charged Gelfand with “undisciplined and disloyal behavior.” Six days later, on January 11, the SWP Political Committee expelled him. This was the last meeting of the SWP Political Committee attended by Joseph Hansen. He died in New York City exactly one week later, on January 18, 1979. Hansen was 68 years old.

In a letter to the SWP Political Committee, dated January 29, 1979, Gelfand stated that he had been purged from the SWP to block the exposure of agents inside the party. “This purge,” he wrote, “is the result

of my persistent and principled fight over the last 18 months to obtain satisfactory answers and explanations to the various questions raised by Joseph Hansen's and Sylvia Franklin's relationship with the FBI and GPU."

On July 18, 1979 Gelfand filed a lawsuit in federal court in Los Angeles, alleging that the government violated his First Amendment rights by infiltrating the SWP with agents who expelled him from the political party of his choosing. Gelfand named as defendants high US government officials—including the attorney general and the directors of the FBI and CIA—as well as leading members of the Socialist Workers Party.

The SWP immediately filed a motion to dismiss Gelfand's lawsuit. Oral arguments were made before United States District Judge Mariana R. Pfaelzer on November 19, 1979.

In June 1980 Pfaelzer denied the SWP's motion, finding that Gelfand's complaint raised fundamental constitutional issues. She wrote that "the government manipulation and takeover of plaintiff's political party that is alleged ... is a drastic interference with the associational rights of its adherents and cannot pass constitutional muster." [60]

Gelfand and his lawyers took depositions of many current and former SWP members. The first to be deposed was Sylvia Doxsee, who had relocated to an exclusive neighborhood along Chicago's "Gold Coast." In the course of her deposition, she invoked memory loss 231 times. She admitted, however, during the course of the deposition that she had previously appeared before at least two federal grand juries. Referencing her grand jury testimony, Doxsee-Callen said:

Q: Did you take the Fifth Amendment on any questions?

A: On some I did.

Q: How did you know to take the Fifth Amendment?

A: From reading the papers from the McCarthy's thing. I copied it down, even what to say.

Q: Did you talk to anybody about when to use the Fifth Amendment?

A: No. I probably should have, but I'm just so dumb.

Q: What types of areas did you take the Fifth Amendment in?

A: Oh, I don't remember.

Q: Well, would it be fair to say that certain questions you were willing to answer?

A: I don't remember.

Q: Well, did you answer any questions?

A: That I don't remember either. Maybe I didn't answer any questions, I don't know. [61]

Although grand jury proceedings are generally sealed, Gelfand's attorneys petitioned a federal court in New York to release the transcripts of Sylvia Callen's testimony of 1954 and 1958. This request was bitterly opposed by the SWP, which argued for continued secrecy on the basis that the "grand jury testimony is wholly irrelevant to any material issue in this litigation" and "should not be disclosed."

The judge in New York released the transcripts to Judge Pfaelzer in Los Angeles. Pfaelzer, a liberal Democratic judge, was managing the case with extreme caution.

Her ruling in June 1980 had accepted that Gelfand's expulsion from the SWP would be unconstitutional if engineered by government agents to prevent their own expulsion. However, as the case proceeded, Pfaelzer, the SWP, and the government sought to block Gelfand from accessing the evidence he would need to prove that his First Amendment right was denied by the government agents who expelled him from the SWP.

As Gelfand and his attorneys wrote in their closing brief on summary

judgment:

"Legally, this case presents a double paradox. For the court, there is the tension between the enforcement of First Amendment rights on the one hand and the duty to protect claims of national security on the other. In denying the motions to dismiss, the court in ringing terms affirmed the right to political association free from governmental interference. By upholding the government's claim of informer privilege on plaintiff's motion to compel, however, the court demonstrated its sensitivity to the countervailing concerns. Rarely does a case require the reconciliation of two such fundamentally opposing legal principles.

"The plaintiff faces the other side of the coin. On the one hand he is told that, if he can prove that the leaders of the Party are agents of the United States government, he will establish the violation of his constitutional rights. Yet the most straightforward method of proof—examination of relevant government documents and direct responses to questions aimed at government agencies—has been denied to him." [62]

Pfaelzer appeared concerned that Gelfand's evidence-gathering efforts would lead to the publication of state secrets regarding the penetration of the SWP. When denying Gelfand's request that Zborowski be compelled to testify, she said:

"Now, my feeling is that Mr. Zborowski, given the very nature of this case, when postured up against, since the case was filed, an enactment known as the Protection of Certain National Security Information, which has just become law this year, does or would run a possible risk of violating section 601(a) of that act, were he asked to identify either by name or description or anything else which might lead to the identity of possible intelligence agents who might be superficially participating in this Socialist Workers Party.

"And that act specifically provides that if any person has such information and knowingly discloses it, regardless of whatever the motivation, can be prosecuted, fined \$50,000, and imprisoned up to ten years. And, therefore, I feel that his invoking the Fifth Amendment in that area, which is the pivotal point of this lawsuit, perhaps, nonetheless is a legitimate concern of the witness and his counsel that must be honored by this court. And, therefore, insofar as any invocation of the Fifth Amendment that has, up to now, been asserted in this deposition, I'm not going to order him to further answer." [63]

The highest levels of the US government and military-intelligence apparatus were closely monitoring the case. A June 11, 1982 memorandum from Central Intelligence Agency General Counsel Stanley Sporkin to CIA Director William J. Casey cites the Gelfand case as an "item of major interest" for the CIA.

Referencing a request by Gelfand and his attorneys that the CIA and other state agencies reveal the identities of agents in the party, the recently-declassified CIA memo reads:

"In Gelfand v. Attorney General, DCI, et al., Gelfand claims that alleged CIA and FBI agents in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP)

expelled him from the party. In pretrial discovery, Gelfand submitted interrogatories asking the DCI [Director of Central Intelligence] whether 19 named SWP members are or have been CIA agents and whether CIA believes that one named individual is a Soviet intelligence agent. The DCI refused to answer the interrogatories on the ground that answering them would tend to reveal intelligence activities, sources, and methods. The U.S. District Court hearing the case upheld the DCI's refusal to answer, holding that the DCI's statutory responsibility to protect intelligence sources and methods and the CIA's statutory exemption from any requirement to disclose the names or functions of CIA personnel justify the refusal to answer." [64]

Under pressure from the government, Pfaelzer sought to restrict the focus of the trial to the narrow procedural issue of whether Gelfand technically violated party rules by continuing to press for answers on the Hansen and Callen exposures after the SWP leadership told him to stop.

When the proceedings began, Gelfand's attorney, John Burton, asked Judge Pfaelzer to release the transcripts of the Callen grand jury transcripts that had been forwarded from New York. The judge replied that she would rule later on that request. Several further requests for the release of the transcripts were brushed aside. Her brusque demeanor and seemingly hostile attitude to Gelfand gave the impression that she would deny the request.

On the last day of the trial, March 9, 1983, SWP National Secretary Barnes was called to testify. Apparently confident that Pfaelzer would not release the grand jury transcripts, Barnes not only defended Franklin. He concluded his testimony with an extraordinary tribute to this GPU agent:

Q: Now, was it your opinion at the time you received [Gelfand's letter] that there was no evidence whatsoever to indicate that Sylvia Franklin was an agent of the GPU?

A: All the evidence is just the opposite. Her whole comportment not only when she was in the movement but everything that's happened since she left indicates that she is exactly what she was: a loyal, hard-working, and model member of our movement.

Q: That is still your opinion today?

A: Well, my opinion today is she is one of my heroes after the harassment and what she's been through the last couple of years. I would even feel more strongly about her, her character, than I did then.

Q: Now, was Sylvia Franklin the subject of an SWP Control Commission investigation?

A: No. Sylvia Franklin was not the subject of an SWP Control Commission. Sylvia Caldwell was invited to an SWP Control Commission hearing to discuss the fact of the Shachtmanites were spreading this rumor. The control commission had their hearing and then they passed a motion saying, one, that there is zero evidence that there is anything connected with this rumor that could be true and, number two, which of course is the key of why they met, to request of the Shachtmanites to cease spreading this rumor because of that. [65]

These lies may have proved too much for Pfaelzer. Following Barnes' testimony, Pfaelzer suddenly released the transcripts of both the 1954 and 1958 grand jury hearings. While Pfaelzer shielded Barnes from exposure on the witness stand, these transcripts nevertheless decisively answered, with Callen's own words, the question of her role as a GPU agent inside the SWP.

In her 1954 testimony, Callen employed the tactic that she would later use when confronted by North and Mitchell in 1977 and during her 1980 deposition, i.e., memory loss. In 1954, Callen did confirm that she had been married to Franklin, and that they had attended meetings of the Stalinist Young Communist League. But in response to crucial questions, such as whether she had met with Louis Budenz, Callen stated: "I can't answer that because of possible self-incrimination," invoking her Fifth Amendment privilege. [66]

In her second grand jury appearance, on June 18, 1958, Callen was more forthcoming. She realized that the grand jury was preparing indictments for an espionage case against her former GPU handler, Robert Soblen, and that she was facing the danger of a lengthy prison term, if not the death penalty, on charges of treason.

The US government attorney began his interrogation by reminding Callen (now addressed as "Mrs. Doxsee") of problems that arose during her 1954 appearance:

Q. You do recall testifying before a grand jury?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. And you do recall, Mrs. Doxsee, that at that time your memory was not as good as it might be?

A. Yes.

Q. And have you since that time tried to improve your memory as best as you could?

A. Yes, I have.

Q. And have you talked over the matters with your husband?

A. Yes.

Q. And do you feel that you are beginning to remember some things that you had difficulty with before.

A. Yes. [67]

Callen told the story of her role as an agent inside the SWP. She recalled how she was paid to hand over confidential information from the desk of James Cannon to two leading GPU spies, Dr. Gregory Rabinowitz—the "Roberts" Budenz worked with—and Jack Soble, the brother of Robert Soblen. Under examination by a government attorney, the transcript of her testimony read, in part:

Q: If I can make a little resume here, Miss Doxsee, you say then that you joined the Young Communist League in the middle thirties, but after you joined the Young Communist League and at the suggestion from someone from the Communist Party you joined an organization that was part of the Social Workers' [sic] organization. Is that right?

A: I think that's it.

Q: Then ultimately you entered the office of James Cannon and became his secretary?

A: Yes.

Q: Now, during the time that you were working in Mr. Cannon's office, did you ever discuss anything that you learned there with anybody else?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you recall who it was that you discussed that with?

A: Well, I used to go to my former husband's apartment, Zalmond's apartment.

Q: Did you meet anyone there?

A: I met—not every time I went up there—but I had met a man I called Jack [Jack was the alias used by Gregory Rabinowitz—aka Roberts—during his meetings with Sylvia Franklin]. I don't know

his name.

Q: This man, Jack, you say, was introduced to you by Louis Budenz?

A: Yes.

Q: And that was in Chicago?

A: Yes, that's the way I recall it.

Q: Do you ever recall meeting a woman to whom you gave information?

A: Yes; a woman's apartment.

Q: And was that a different apartment from the apartment you have previously described?

A: Yes. [68]

Callen was referring to the apartment of Stalinist agent Lucy Booker. She then testified, "I used to go up there and type reports also, the way I used to at my husband's apartment, and sometimes, as I recall, she was there and sometimes she wasn't just as I recall."

There, she would sometimes meet Jack Soble, who she knew as "Sam." He would pay her for her services.

Q: Do you recall how you knew—commenced going to this apartment that you're now describing, the woman's apartment?

A: No, I don't.

Q: Did someone tell you to go there?

A: No, I hadn't given that any thought. I don't know whether someone brought me—I can't remember whether I was given an address, I really can't remember that, the sequence there.

Q: Now, you described the mimeographed material which you gave, can you recall the contents of the material that you typed?

A: Well, I remember I used to just type up—it was mostly during faction fights in the party and political committee meetings, who was fighting with who, and then if there was correspondence from Leon Trotsky that I saw, I would try to remember what was in the letters and write that all out, who's going with who and that kind of thing, personal things like that, I remember, how much money they had—I knew, you know, bank balances and stuff like that. [69]

Callen and the GPU had access to everything: international correspondence, internal discussion papers from Trotskyist movements worldwide, all of Cannon's correspondence, and personal information about the membership.

The release of the grand jury transcripts exploded the cover-up of the GPU's penetration of the SWP, and completely vindicated the investigation conducted by the International Committee.

But Judge Pfaelzer, guided by a desire to prevent Gelfand from exposing the depth of the FBI's involvement in the SWP, denied his requests that she release information about specific agents operating in the party.

Pfaelzer ruled against Gelfand by conjuring up a clearly unattainable level of proof.

Pfaelzer asserted that Gelfand could not prove his case by a "preponderance of evidence" if there were other explanations—no matter how implausible—for the SWP defendants' actions. The judge acknowledged that Gelfand's conclusion that the SWP leaders were agents "might be a permissible inference to be drawn, but you can't prevail by a preponderance of the evidence on that because it's equally likely that they just sat there without investigating because they had blind faith. *You can't win on a preponderance of the evidence based solely on the fact that the charges were true.*" (Emphasis added). [70]

In a further exchange with Gelfand's attorney, Pfaelzer said:

"Let us assume that you prove that every single thing that Mr. Gelfand said is true and that there is no doubt but that Hansen was working with the FBI and may indeed have been an agent of the FBI at some point, and that Sylvia Caldwell was an agent of the GPU, and that indeed his suspicions were well founded and they made a mistake, the Party made a mistake in believing the contents of Healy's Big Lie.

"Now, let's say that is all proved, what permissible inference may be drawn from that if that is all you have?"

Burton said, "Your Honor, it can't be examined out of context."

To which Pfaelzer responded, "Oh, no. It can be examined out of context." [71]

This reasoning does not stand up to basic legal analysis. As all first year law students know, the "preponderance of evidence" standard only requires a civil plaintiff show there is a greater than 50 percent chance that the evidence presented proves the claim, not that all other potential inferences have been disproven. Furthermore, circumstantial evidence is always evaluated in context and frequently incriminating evidence can lose its meaning when viewed in isolation.

As the Workers League correctly noted, "The central pillar of the SWP's defense—that Gelfand had been propagating a 'slander campaign' manufactured by the International Committee—was utterly shattered. The transcripts' release completed the destruction of the defendants' credibility." [72]

### Joseph Hansen and the control commission

Joseph Hansen could not be deposed or questioned during the Gelfand Case. To the end, Hansen actively defended Callen, however, having organized an international campaign to slander those who raised questions about what was ultimately proven to be the truth: she was an agent of the GPU.

Why did Hansen, and the SWP after his death, go to such lengths to defend Callen? Why did not they simply admit, even before the release of the grand jury transcripts, that James P. Cannon's secretary had been an agent of the GPU from 1939 to 1947? By the mid-1970s, when the International Committee initiated its investigation into *Security and the Fourth International*, nearly 30 years had passed since Callen left the SWP.

The obvious question is: Why did Hansen and Barnes cling so desperately to the transparent lie that Callen had been an "exemplary" comrade? Would it not have been easier for Hansen to admit that the SWP had been duped by Callen's claims of innocence, and that the 1947 control commission's investigation had been inadequate?

The only answer is that the activities of Callen and Hansen were too closely intertwined. Hansen was compelled to lie about Sylvia Callen because—as a document obtained by Gelfand's attorneys near the conclusion of the litigation proved—he was shielding his own role as an agent inside the SWP.

Late in the litigation, Judge Pfaelzer compelled the SWP to turn over a letter sent to Hansen by his close friend, Vaughn T. "Irish" O'Brien.

In this letter, dated June 8, 1976, O'Brien recalled an encounter in the late 1940s or early 1950s—the general time frame of the control commission and the publication of Budenz's books—with Pearl Kluger, a former member of A.J. Muste's American Workers Party who knew Budenz personally. O'Brien wrote, "I had not seen Pearl for a considerable period of time, but she immediately said, 'Budenz says your

friend Joe Hansen worked with the GPU.” [73]

This extraordinary revelation—that the same man who had originally exposed Sylvia Callen had also identified Joseph Hansen as a GPU agent—was substantiated by the Socialist Workers Party. Just one month after the conclusion of the Gelfand trial, in the April 15, 1983 edition of the *Militant*, SWP leader Larry Seigle wrote that Budenz “had fingered not just CP members, but also several SWP members, as Soviet agents. Among these were Joseph Hansen, a central leader of the SWP until his death in 1979, and Sylvia Caldwell, who had been a secretary in the SWP national office.” [74]

It is evident that there were, in the immediate aftermath of the Gelfand trial, disagreements within the SWP leadership as to how to handle the evidence that incriminated Hansen as a GPU operative. Seigle’s public acknowledgment of Budenz’s exposure of both Caldwell and Hansen—thus confirming the allegations made by Gelfand—was evidently seen as a major political blunder.

Just one day after Seigle’s article appeared in the *Militant*, the SWP leadership formulated a plan to reverse the damaging admission. The minutes from the SWP Political Committee meeting of April 16, 1983 show that the Barnes leadership conspired to denounce the grand jury transcripts as forgeries and double down on its defense of Callen-Caldwell:

“We should write an article presenting the party’s position on the accusations against Sylvia Caldwell. The article should present for the party and the international movement our political position on the responsibility of the party to defend itself against COINTELPRO-type ‘snitch-jacket’ operations of the kind that is now being carried out against Sylvia Caldwell and the SWP. It is especially necessary to explain again, for those who have never learned or have forgotten, the responsibility of the leadership of a revolutionary workers party to defend loyally each and every member against such slander campaigns.

“The article will examine the new ‘evidence’ presented by the FBI in Pfaelzer’s courtroom and circulated by the WL/WRP, consisting of what is presented as transcripts of testimony given by Sylvia Caldwell before two grand juries investigating Soviet ‘espionage’ in the 1950s. We have no way of knowing how much the transcripts are doctored. Moreover, testimony given under these conditions—before a secret grand jury, without a lawyer, under threat of indictment as a Soviet spy in the shadow of the judicial murder of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg—cannot be taken as true by any serious workers’ leader.” [75]

The minutes also reveal that the publication of the grand jury transcripts, exposing the cover-up of Sylvia Franklin, had produced widespread anxiety within the SWP membership and among its international allies.

“Because of inexperience and some confusion on these points, in the party and in the international movement, an article along these lines would be helpful.” [76]

On August 5, 1983, the *Militant* published a report that had been given by Jack Barnes in May, weeks after the PC meeting, to the SWP’s national committee. Barnes resumed the defense of Callen-Caldwell:

“Another thing that happened at the trial needs to be emphasized. And that is what the government and the WL-WRP did concerning our comrade Sylvia Caldwell, whom they accuse of having been an agent of the Soviet secret police during the years when she was a member of our party, from the mid-1930s to the

late-1940s. As we know, Sylvia was vilified by the FBI disrupter and stool pigeon, Louis Budenz. She was hounded by the FBI throughout the years of the witchhunt. She was hauled before the federal grand juries investigating Soviet ‘espionage’ during the 1950’s, like the one that indicted the Rosenbergs. And she has now had the WL-WRP continuing the effort as a means of furthering their disruption operation against our movement, here and internationally.” [77]

This tirade was a lie from beginning to end. If “our comrade Sylvia Caldwell” had been, as Barnes claimed, the subject of vicious persecution throughout the 1950s, why had the SWP failed to mount a public campaign in her defense? Why was there not a word written in the *Militant* about “comrade Sylvia” being “hauled before federal grand juries investigating Soviet ‘espionage’ during the 1950’s, like the one that indicted the Rosenbergs”? Why had the SWP and the *Militant* not denounced publicly the listing of Sylvia Callen as a GPU co-conspirator in the 1960 federal indictment of Robert Soblen?

Barnes went on to imply that the 1958 transcript was a forgery, referring to it as “what the FBI claims is a transcript of her testimony before a grand jury in 1958.” He continued:

“This is supposed to be the perfect frame—an official transcript, in which the woman under oath herself says that she did the things she was accused of doing. (I leave aside the fact that nowhere in the transcript is there any mention of the Soviet secret police, or any activity by Sylvia on their behalf. All it quotes her as saying is that she was gathering information for the Communist Party (CP). It is revealing that, for the WL-WRP as for the FBI, being a member of the CP and being a Soviet espionage agent are the same thing.)” [78]

The intense involvement of the Communist Party in the operations of the GPU—and especially in the penetration of the Fourth International and the SWP and in the organization of Trotsky’s assassination—is an indisputable and massively documented historical fact. Budenz’s own writings and testimony had made very clear that he, and those whom he recruited for anti-Trotskyist espionage activity, had been working for the GPU. Barnes’ claim that “Sylvia’s” admission that “she was gathering information for the Communist Party” does not prove that she was acting on behalf of the GPU testifies as much to his desperation as to his unscrupulous dishonesty. The reasons for Barnes’ desperation are to be found in the evidence uncovered in the course of the Gelfand case and the *Security and the Fourth International* investigation.

The significance of the O’Brien letter, and Seigle’s and Barnes’ statements about the release of the 1958 transcript was summed up by David North in an article titled “Barnes Still Defends Sylvia Franklin,” which appeared in the *Bulletin*, the newspaper of the Workers League, on September 9, 1983. North wrote:

“The transcripts showed that the facts presented by Louis F. Budenz, ex-editor of the Stalinist *Daily Worker*, in his November 1950 affidavit exposing Franklin, were absolutely true. Franklin explicitly admitted in her testimony that she had been a member of the Communist Party and that she had been recruited by Louis Budenz to work as a spy inside the SWP.

“These transcripts shattered the decades-old coverup of the true role of Franklin inside the SWP. The countless lies of Joseph

Hansen, Barnes, and their accomplice, George Novack, in her defense ('an exemplary comrade,' 'a warm human being,' 'Budenz' foul slander,' 'Healy's Big Lie,' etc.) were exposed once and for all.

"Furthermore, other evidence introduced at trial established the full significance of the Franklin coverup. Budenz, it emerged, had also identified Hansen as a GPU agent at about the same time he had identified Franklin. This fact was contained in a letter written on June 8, 1976 to Joseph Hansen by his close friend, Vaughn T. O'Brien. [79]

After quoting Seigle's April 15, 1983 article noting that Budenz had also fingered "several SWP members," including Joseph Hansen, as GPU agents, North continued:

"Although he publicly exposed Franklin, Budenz never published what he knew about the GPU activities of Hansen. This was because he was instructed not to do so by the FBI. It was protecting its highly-prized agent inside the SWP, Joseph Hansen—who, as other evidence established, had sought and obtained a covert relationship with the FBI in 1940." [80]

It was essential, from the standpoint of the SWP's cover-up, that Budenz, as a source of the claim that both Callen and Hansen were agents, be labeled a "slanderer," "stooldpigeon," and "perjurer." Moreover, if Hansen and the SWP were to admit that Callen was an agent, it would lend legitimacy to Shachtman and Glotzer's 1947 source. This source not only warned about Callen but also said, in the words of Cannon, that "the FBI has an agent in our party, high in the leadership." Cannon said Shachtman's Workers Party had warned the SWP of the FBI agent "for years."

The *Security and the Fourth International* investigation uncovered documents revealing that Hansen met secretly with the State Department in the aftermath of Trotsky's assassination. At these meetings, Hansen admitted to having a relationship with the GPU at the same exact time the Stalinists were infiltrating the SWP with agents like Franklin. He asked for, and received, information for follow-up meetings with the FBI in New York City. None of these facts were known to the National Committee of the SWP until the International Committee published them.

While Hansen's role as an agent is clear, the full details of his operations with the GPU and US agencies are not yet known. There were multiple sides to his motivation for initiating contact with the State Department and FBI. He feared that if US officials knew he had been in contact with the GPU, he would need an alibi, which he provided to the agents with whom he met after Trotsky's assassination. He also hoped to deflect attention from his past connections to the GPU in the investigations into Trotsky's assassination.

Hansen began working for the FBI, handing over to them information about the SWP's internal investigation into the assassination, as well as providing the US government a copy of the "W Memorandum," a list of names of GPU agents the SWP had received from ex-Communist Party member Whittaker Chambers.

In exchange for this and other internal party information, Hansen was able to avoid prosecution when, in 1941, the Justice Department, at the behest of the FBI, prosecuted 29 members of the SWP with sedition and conspiracy to overthrow the government in the Minneapolis Smith Act Trial. As the *World Socialist Web Site* detailed in its two-part review of Donna Haverty-Stacke's book *Trotskyists on Trial* (Part one, Part two), Hansen's absence from the list of defendants was otherwise inexplicable

on account of his role as Trotsky's secretary in Mexico City from 1939 to 1940.

While the documents published by the ICFI showed Hansen's relationship with the FBI began in 1940, they do not indicate that this relationship ever came to an end.

The SWP had the opportunity to uncover the truth about Callen and Hansen. If the 1947 SWP control commission had made a real effort to investigate the claims about FBI and GPU infiltration by Shachtman and Glotzer's source, which followed the Budenz revelations, they would have exposed the agents who did untold damage to the SWP over the course of the next decades, including Hansen himself. In the course of the SWP's suit against the FBI over COINTELPRO, the government was forced to admit that it had infiltrated the SWP with hundreds of agents, comprising a substantial portion of the party membership. Soviet spy logs and cables, acquired by the US Army Signals Intelligence through the VENONA program, which were published in the mid-1990s, explicitly reference Callen—codename "Satyr"—as a Soviet agent.

Instead, the control commission let the matter pass and swore those present to secrecy. Callen was allowed to leave the movement without any public statement from the party explaining her sudden departure. The SWP dropped all coverage of Louis Budenz's revelations at precisely the time the government was acting on the SWP's prior demand that Budenz be interviewed by a grand jury. When Budenz published his second book in 1950, *Men Without Faces*, the SWP worked with Callen herself, who dictated to Farrell Dobbs how the SWP should respond to Budenz's allegations.

Hansen maneuvered to protect Callen, as evidenced by his exchanges with Isaac Don Levine in 1958 and Gerry Healy in 1960. The SWP failed to report on the 1960 Robert Soblen trial and the testimony of Jack Soble, which further identified Callen as an agent. Cannon, in his 1966 letter to Reba Hansen, also gave a false portrayal of the 1947 control commission, indicating that it investigated the matter and allowed Callen to "continue with her work."

As a result, Hansen remained at his leadership post, with access to information about the world movement's activities and membership. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Hansen became the dominant political figure in the SWP, engineering its political break with the International Committee in 1963 and its reunification with the pro-Stalinist United Secretariat of Michel Pablo. Hansen also oversaw the recruitment of Jack Barnes and a group of 12 students from Carleton College, a rural private college in Minnesota, and helped orchestrate their elevation into the leadership of the party.

The ICFI's *Security and the Fourth International* investigation was an enormous undertaking and a milestone in the history of the Trotskyist movement. The ICFI conducted this struggle under conditions where the Stalinist bureaucracy and Pabloite apparatus wielded considerable influence over the labor movement and sought to blackguard and isolate the ICFI.

Despite these unfavorable circumstances, the ICFI fought to expose the crimes of the Stalinist bureaucracy in orchestrating the murder of Trotsky and the infiltration of the Trotskyist movement.

To the contemporary reader, it might seem difficult to understand the bitterness of the denunciations that were hurled against the ICFI for undertaking this investigation. Opposition to the *Security and the Fourth International* investigation from the various Pabloite and Stalinist organizations had two central motivations. First, the state agents inside the SWP and the international Pabloite organizations were determined to block their own exposure through the ICFI's investigation. Second, and most fundamentally, *Security and the Fourth International's* exposure of the counterrevolutionary history and role of Stalinism cut across the political agenda of the Pabloites and their Stalinist allies.

But, over the past 40 years, the publication of new evidence has



substantiated the ICFI's allegations as fact. Even today, many who cite the information made public through *Security and the Fourth International* do so without acknowledging the investigation itself or the ICFI's role.

The lies to defend Hansen and to slander the *Security and the Fourth International* investigation continue to the present. The ex-Pabloite, St. Mary's professor Susan Weissman, for example, called the investigation "a bizarre, sectarian smear campaign against Joseph Hansen." When challenged to retract her slanders in a November 10, 2015 open letter by David North, Weissman hid behind a veil of dishonest silence.

To honest historians, as well as workers and youth coming into struggle with the capitalist system, the investigation is an invaluable source for understanding the counterrevolutionary nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy and the necessity of protecting the revolutionary movement from agents of the state. The historical significance of *Security and the Fourth International* endures.

Notes:

[1] The *Militant*, March 8, 1947. Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/themilitant/1947/v11n10-mar-08-1947.pdf>.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Budenz, Louis, *This Is My Story*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1947), p. 244.

[4] Ibid., p. 245.

[5] Ibid., pp. 245–46.

[6] Ibid., pp. 246.

[7] Ibid., p. 257.

[8] Ibid., pp. 258.

[9] Ibid., p. 259.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., p. 262.

[12] The *Militant*, March 8, 1947. Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/themilitant/1947/v11n10-mar-08-1947.pdf>.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] The *Militant*, March 22, 1947. Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/themilitant/1947/v11n12-mar-22-1947.pdf>.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

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