

The place of *Security and the Fourth International* in the history of the Trotskyist movement

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The following report was delivered by David North, the National Chairman of the Socialist Equality Party (US) and International Editorial Board Chairman of the World Socialist Web Site, to introduce the SEP Summer School, held between August 2-9, 2025. The WSWs will be publishing all the lectures at the school in the coming weeks.

1. I am very pleased to welcome members of the Socialist Equality Party in the United States and comrades from sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International from all over the world to the SEP's biannual summer school. During the next seven days, we will be devoting this school to an intensive review of Security and the Fourth International.

2. The International Committee of the Fourth International initiated its investigation into the assassination of Leon Trotsky a half century ago. The resolution that began the investigation which came to be known as "Security and the Fourth International" was adopted at the Sixth Congress of the International Committee in May 1975.

3. The political issues that precipitated the investigation arose out of the decision of the Workers League national committee on August 31, 1974 to remove Tim Wohlforth from the position of national secretary after it was discovered that his personal companion, Nancy Fields, had the closest family connection with a high-level official of the Central Intelligence Agency. Wohlforth had deliberately concealed this fact from the party leadership.

4. Moreover, Wohlforth had selected Fields to accompany him to the Fifth Congress of the ICFI in April 1974. She circulated among its delegates, among whom were comrades who conducted their work under conditions of illegality in countries—such as Peru, Spain, Portugal and Greece—which were ruled by police-state dictatorships. Wohlforth, subordinating his political responsibilities to his private affairs, compromised the safety of delegates and the overall security of the congress.

5. In addition to removing Wohlforth from his position as national secretary and suspending Nancy Fields from membership, the Workers League and the International Committee initiated a commission of inquiry into the personal background of Nancy Fields (a.k.a. Nancy Kornreich, a.k.a. Nancy Freuden) to determine, based on obtainable evidence, whether she, apart from her family connections, had a relationship with the CIA. But just as the inquiry was getting under way, Wohlforth and Fields deserted the Workers League. Wohlforth, in his letter of resignation, denounced the pending commission of inquiry as an "inquisition."

6. Within a few months of his resignation, Wohlforth—repudiating his previous 14 years of struggle against the Socialist Workers Party's betrayal of Trotskyism—rejoined the SWP. He wrote a lengthy document that was serialized in the February-March 1975 issue of *Intercontinental*

Press, whose editor was Joseph Hansen, the principal architect of the Socialist Workers Party's 1963 reunification with the Pabloite International Secretariat and repudiation of the foundational principles of the Fourth International.

7. Wohlforth, dismissing the implications of his disregard for the political security of his own party, denounced Healy's intervention in the political crisis in the Workers League as "a form of madness as it rearranges the world according to the individual. He becomes convinced that he is surrounded by CIA agents and proceeds on that basis."

8. Following Wohlforth's diatribe, Hansen published in the March 31, 1975 edition of *Intercontinental Press* a denunciation of the leader of the Workers Revolutionary Party titled "The Secret of Healy's Dialectics." He wrote:

Wohlforth describes Healy's performance as "madness." Would it not be preferable, and perhaps more precise, to use a modern term like "paranoia"?

If the term fits, then the true explanation for Healy's obsessions about CIA agents, and plots against his life, as well as his rages, "extreme reactions," and strange version of dialectics is to be sought not in his politics, philosophical methodology, or models like Pablo or Cannon, but in the workings of a mind best understood by psychiatrists.

9. To place Hansen's denunciation of Healy's concern with security in its appropriate context, it must be recalled that in 1973 information had emerged of massive FBI infiltration of the Socialist Workers Party. The exposure of the infamous COINTELPRO documents revealed that the FBI had hired up to 1,300 informants to spy on the organization. According to official disclosures, at least 301 informers were infiltrated into the party. The documents indicated that the infiltration of agents into the SWP dated back to 1941.

10. For Hansen to deride Healy's concern with security as "paranoia," in the very midst of the public revelation of the FBI's massive infiltration of the SWP, was, to say the least, politically reprehensible and irresponsible. It even undermined the lawsuit that had been filed in 1973 by the Socialist Workers Party and its youth organization, the Young Socialist Alliance, against the federal government's infiltration program. After all, why make such a big deal about FBI infiltration if concern for party security is a manifestation of "paranoia."

11. There was another sinister element in Hansen's denunciation of Healy. In the 1960s and early 1970s, the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union justified its repression of political dissidents by claiming that they

suffered from mental illness. The KGB, the successor of the GPU and NKVD, frequently sent political opponents to psychiatrists. Nikita Khrushchev, in a public speech, explicitly connected crime and opposition to the Soviet regime with mental illness.

12. This slander laid the groundwork for using psychiatric internment as a tool of political repression. Among those subjected to this form of repression were the scientist Zhores Medvedev, the writer Yuli Daniel, and the poets Iosif Brodsky and Natalya Gorbanevskaya. Dissidents who criticized the regime were commonly diagnosed as suffering from “paranoid delusions of reformism” and even a “paranoid development of the personality.”

13. In his denunciation of Healy as suffering from “paranoia,” Hansen was resorting to Stalinist-style slanders. The roots of his training in such methods would eventually become clear.

14. Of greater significance than the proximate causes of the decision to initiate Security and the Fourth International was the broader historical context. In its reply to Hansen’s “Secret of Healy’s Dialectics,” published in April 1975, the Political Committee of the Workers Revolutionary Party declared:

Our insistence on security training is entirely consistent with the traditions and principles of the revolutionary movement as fought for by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Security is not an abstract or secondary question. A party that is not founded on revolutionary discipline in its own ranks cannot command the support of the working class in confronting the capitalist state machine, overthrowing it, and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This is not to present security in a one-sided way. It is to be seen as a central political question in the training of a revolutionary cadre in the working class. A serious revolutionary party does not indulge in panic in dealing with security questions in its ranks, because it cannot organize its ranks properly to repel police penetration under panic.

This means vigilance at all times on questions of security in the knowledge that a trained revolutionary party, deeply embedded in the working class, is the single biggest guarantor against the counterrevolutionary conspiracies of the CIA, FBI, MI5, MI6, etc.

Hansen’s article enables us to reopen vital pages in the history of Trotskyism. We are obliged to present this history, warts and all, since our movement has, in the past, paid a terrible price when it has ignored and derided security training in its ranks. These are the pages that Hansen wants to suppress.

Trotsky was murdered by Stalin’s GPU because the objective conditions placed the Fourth International in considerable isolation from the masses and, consequently, his personal safety was endangered continuously. While he was surrounded by the most devoted political following in history, some were nevertheless lax in security matters, which enabled the GPU assassin to strike. ...

The International Committee of the Fourth International is not going to be intimidated by the shouts and screams of the revisionists. They can call us “sectarians” and “paranoids” until they are blue in the face. In using these labels, they are in fact attacking the IC’s fight for principles and its attention to discipline and security vigilance in our ranks. We are not building a bucket-shop for middle-class free-booters and adventurers, which is the hallmark of Hansen’s international groupings. That road is an open invitation to the CIA and penetration by the police, because it is precisely among such elements that the police elements operate so breezily.

Hansen wants to hide the security question; we want to elevate it

in the training and building of our movement. That is why we feel it necessary to reopen the pages of history of Trotskyism to explain the background of why action was taken against Wohlforth and why similar steps will be taken again in the future if the necessity arises.

15. When the International Committee held its Sixth Congress in May 1975 and voted unanimously to accept the resolution, put forward by Gerry Healy, to begin the Security and the Fourth International investigation, almost exactly 35 years had passed since the assassination. The assassination of Leon Trotsky was as recent, calculating in relative terms, as 1990 is to us. Many people who had been active in the Fourth International and the SWP at the time of Trotsky’s death were still alive. Many of these individuals were not exceptionally old.

- Jean Van Heijenoort, who had been Trotsky’s secretary from 1932 to 1939, was 63 years old when I interviewed him in September 1975.

- Harold Robins, who had served in Coyoacan in 1939-40 as the captain of Trotsky’s guard, was 67 years old when he was contacted by the Workers League in the summer of 1975.

- Felix Morrow, a leading member of the SWP’s Political Committee in 1939-40, was 71 years old when I met with him in 1976.

16. Many of the principal figures in the conspiracy against Trotsky also were still in their sixties.

- Ramon Mercader, the assassin of Trotsky, was 61 years old and living in the USSR when the investigation began.

- Mark Zborowski, the most important of the GPU agents operating inside the Fourth International, was 67 years old when he and his wife were photographed outside their San Francisco apartment building in August 1975.

- Joseph Hansen was 65 years old.

- Sylvia Callen, the GPU agent who became the personal secretary of SWP leader James P Cannon, was 63 years old.

- Sylvia Ageloff, who had introduced Jackson to Trotsky, was 65.

17. I reference these individuals and their ages in 1975 to emphasize that when the investigation began, the assassination was not “ancient history.” In historical terms, Trotsky’s assassination was, if not a recent event, well within the political memory of many living individuals. And yet, at that time, members of the SWP and defenders of Joseph Hansen expressed amazement that the ICFI was so preoccupied with, or even interested in, the assassination of Leon Trotsky, which had happened “so long ago.” Why were we “still talking about” the assassination?

18. Again, to provide a sense of the time span, the split of 1985-86 and the death of Gerry Healy in 1989 are more distant events today than the assassination of Trotsky in 1940 was to the initiation of Security and the Fourth International in 1975. And if I may recall the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in November 1963, almost 62 years ago, the circumstances of his death are still the subject of intense controversy. It is only in the last few months that a new trove of documents relating to the FBI’s investigation of the Kennedy assassination was made public. These documents, far from settling all questions about the killing of the president, have provided fuel for new questions about the conspiracy that ended the life of John F. Kennedy.

19. Prior to the initiation of Security and the Fourth International, no systematic investigation into the assassination of Leon Trotsky by the movement he founded had taken place. This was all the more inexplicable given the fact that Trotsky was a figure of “world historical” significance, the co-leader of the 1917 October socialist revolution that massively influenced the entire course of the twentieth century. Moreover, the impact of his assassination on the Fourth International—and, therefore, the development of the international class struggle and the fate of humanity—was incalculable. One could say of Trotsky’s death what

Engels wrote of Marx's passing: His death left humanity shorter by a head, and its greatest head at that.

20. Within the Fourth International, the historical narrative of Trotsky's assassination had hardly changed since August 21, 1940. And it was this: Trotsky had been murdered by a single GPU agent, Ramon Mercader, alias Frank Jacson, who had wormed his way into Trotsky's villa in Coyoacán by exploiting the naivete of the well-meaning Sylvia Ageloff. There was absolutely no talk of a broader conspiracy involving GPU agents working inside the Fourth International and the SWP. The evidence that Robert Sheldon Harte—the guard who opened the gates of the Coyoacán villa on May 24, 1940, the date of the first attempt on Trotsky's life, to the assassination squad of David Siqueiros—had been a GPU agent was brushed aside.

21. To the extent that there had been an investigation into Trotsky's assassination, it had been conducted not by the Fourth International, but, rather, by the United States government during its investigation and prosecution of Soviet espionage agents in the aftermath of World War II. These state investigations exposed the network of GPU agents who organized the assassination of Trotsky and the murder of leading Trotskyists in Europe in 1937-38, including Erwin Wolf, Ignace Reiss, Lev Sedov and Rudolf Klement.

22. The exposure of the Sobolevicius brothers—Jack Soble and Robert Soblen—Mark Zborowski, Floyd Cleveland Miller, Thomas Black and Sylvia Callen was the work of the US government. The indictments, arrests, trials and testimonies of members of the GPU network of anti-Trotskyist agents were the subject of banner headlines across the United States. But the exposure of these agents and the critical information that it had uncovered about the penetration of the Fourth International was ignored by the Socialist Workers Party, even though many of the defendants were placed on trial in New York City, only a few miles from the SWP party headquarters.

23. I will not preempt the lectures that comrades will deliver this week. However, it is a fact that Security and the Fourth International transformed the historical narrative of Trotsky's assassination. All serious accounts of the Stalinist conspiracy against the Fourth International and the assassination of Leon Trotsky will take as their starting point the investigation and findings of Security and the Fourth International and their irrefutable confirmation during the lawsuit against the SWP and US government initiated by Alan Gelfand in 1979 and supported by the Workers League and the International Committee.

24. At this point, only the dregs of Stalinism, the Pabloite and related middle-class radical organizations, and the intellectually corrupt academic milieu of pseudo-leftism continue to ignore, deprecate and deny the overwhelming evidence that the penetration of the SWP by GPU agents played a critical role in the assassination of Trotsky. The role of Sylvia Callen (a.k.a. Sylvia Franklin, Sylvia Caldwell, Sylvia Doozee), the personal secretary of James P. Cannon, as a GPU spy has been conclusively established. The same is true for Robert Sheldon Harte.

25. Above all, the role of Joseph Hansen as a GPU plant and, in the aftermath of Trotsky's assassination, an FBI informer has been conclusively established. This is disputed only by those who believe that it is permissible for a member of a revolutionary socialist organization to hold secret meetings with the GPU and the political police of a capitalist state; and that Hansen's September 1940 request that he be provided with the name of an FBI agent in New York "to whom confidential information could be imparted with impunity" doesn't mean exactly what the words clearly imply; and that Hansen's evasions and flagrant lies about his relations with both the GPU and FBI were not proof of guilt.

26. The significance of Security and the Fourth International extends far beyond its exposure of specific individuals. Security and the Fourth International was never a simple exercise in political detective work. From

its earliest stages the International Committee placed Security and the Fourth International in a broader historical and international context.

27. In its Perspective Resolution of 1978 (amended in June 1979), the Workers League, predecessor of the Socialist Equality Party, stated:

The struggle to train revolutionary cadre on the basis of the historical continuity of Trotskyism has attained unprecedented power and scope through the investigation mounted by the International Committee – beginning in the spring of 1975 at the Sixth World Congress – into the circumstances surrounding the assassination of Trotsky in 1940.

Security and the Fourth International represents nothing less than the reclamation of the whole historical continuity of Bolshevism through the Fourth International and the International Committee from the evil grip of Stalinist counter-revolution and falsification. All the lies and distortions and crimes committed by Stalinism against Trotskyism, the political embodiment of the struggle for the world October; all the monstrous acts committed to confuse and disorient generations of workers about the real history of the October Revolution and the role of Trotsky – these have been dealt a blow from which Stalinism and all the agencies of imperialist counter-revolution will never recover.

Through its investigation, relentlessly unmasking the murders, provocations and disruptions carried out by a vast apparatus of Stalinist and imperialist agents working within the Trotskyist movement, the International Committee has floodlit the whole history of the Fourth International.

28. For decades the power of the Stalinist bureaucracy was ruthlessly employed within the Soviet Union and internationally to suppress the exposure of its crimes. However, the death of Stalin in 1953 coincided with and accelerated the crisis of bureaucratic rule. The exposure of Stalin's crimes in the "secret speech" of Nikita Khrushchev, delivered in February 1956, was followed little more than a half year later by the uprising of Hungarian workers against the Stalinist regime in Budapest. A decade later the Stalinist regimes were shaken by mass movements in Czechoslovakia and Poland.

29. These objective developments, interacting with the bankruptcy of the bureaucracy's program of national economic autarchy, changed profoundly the relationship between Stalinism and Trotskyism. With the initiation of the Security and the Fourth International investigation, the Trotskyist movement passed on to the offensive against the counter-revolutionary bureaucracies.

30. But it must be recognized that this struggle was undertaken at a time when the Stalinist bureaucracies, although in crisis, still retained substantial power and political prestige. Moreover, since 1953 the Pabloite tendencies had functioned as political allies of the Stalinist parties, doing all they could to promote illusions in the possibility of not only their bureaucratic self-reform but also in their revolutionary potential.

31. The initiation of the Security and the Fourth International investigation—which focused attention on the murderous counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism—cut across the Pabloite orientation to the bureaucracies. Moreover, by raising the issue of the infiltration of the Fourth International by police agents—both those of the Stalinist and imperialist states—the International Committee profoundly threatened fundamental state interests.

32. In its initial response to Hansen's vicious denunciation of the International Committee's defense of its own political security, the Workers Revolutionary Party called attention to the record of high level infiltration of the Pabloite organizations by the capitalist state. The

Security and the Fourth International investigation also gathered evidence that implicated Hansen and the Socialist Workers Party in an on-going conspiracy against the Trotskyist movement.

33. The development of Security and the Fourth International was recognized as a serious threat by imperialism and its political agencies. They responded with the September 1976 publication of the notorious “Verdict” in *Intercontinental Press*, which denounced the findings of Hansen’s systematic cover-up of the GPU as a “Shameless Frame-Up.” The leading representatives of virtually every Pabloite organization in the world affixed their signature to this document. As would later be established during the Gelfand Case, none of the signatories had actually read the documents that they were denouncing.

34. The publication of the “Verdict” was followed on January 14, 1977 by a London rally called by the leaders of international Pabloite groups to denounce Healy and Security and the Fourth International. Assembled on what the International Committee memorably and appropriately described as the “Platform of Shame” were, among others, Ernest Mandel, Tim Wohlforth, George Novack (who had been indicted by the ICFI as Hansen’s co-accomplice of the GPU) and Pierre Lambert. The meeting was chaired by the thoroughly unprincipled middle-class radical, Tariq Ali (who eventually repudiated all association with Trotskyism).

35. Amidst an audience of approximately 1,500 Pabloites, Gerry Healy—accompanied by no more than five members of the Workers Revolutionary Party—listened patiently as Mandel, Wohlforth, Novack and Lambert hurled abusive insults in his direction. When the speakers had all run out of breath, Healy rose from his seat and indicated his desire to speak by raising his hand. Over substantial protests from those in the audience who maintained some commitment to democratic procedures, or, at the very least, the traditional British “sense of fair play,” Tariq Ali refused to allow Healy to speak. There had been more than two hours available for denunciations of Healy. But not one minute was made available for Healy to publicly restate the International Committee’s call for an international commission of inquiry to examine the evidence uncovered by the Security and the Fourth International investigation. The meeting broke up in disarray.

36. It is worth quoting from Wohlforth’s autobiography, as he described his own reaction to Healy’s presence:

While I am sure I appeared calm on the surface, deep inside I was seized by an almost uncontrollable fear. It was amazing how this man, accompanied by only a dozen supporters and surrounded by one thousand people sympathetic to what I was about to say, could still create such a reaction in me. No matter what else is said about Healy, no one, after that night, should question his courage or flair for the dramatic.¹

37. At that stage of the investigation, the International Committee had not yet located Sylvia Caldwell-Callen, who had been first identified as a GPU agent by Louis Budenz in 1947 and later, in 1960, listed as an unindicted co-conspirator in the trial of GPU agent Robert Soblen, one of the two Sobolevicius brothers. It was not until May 1977 that Caldwell—maiden name Callen, and previously married to Zalmond Franklin—was located and interviewed in Wheaton, Illinois. By that time, she had divorced Franklin, remarried, and was known as Sylvia Doxsee.

38. Also, it was not until July 1977 that the International Committee acquired, on the basis of a Freedom of Information request, a new trove of declassified documents that revealed the far greater extent of Hansen’s contacts with the FBI in the aftermath of Trotsky’s assassination, which included the letters that referenced Hansen’s aforementioned request for a “confidential contact” to whom information “could be imparted with

impunity.”

39. It was on the basis of the documents and factual material obtained in the spring and summer of 1977 that the International Committee concluded that there was sufficient evidence to publicly accuse Hansen of having operated within the SWP as an agent of the GPU and FBI informer. In a statement dated July 29, 1977, the ICFI declared:

The International Committee has long since proven that Joseph Hansen, by virtue of his coverup of such Stalinist agents as Sylvia Franklin, Floyd Cleveland Miller and Mark Zborowski, is an accomplice of the GPU.

The International Committee has now proved that he established secret contact with the FBI and delivered internal SWP documents to its agents.

The International Committee has demonstrated before the world Trotskyist movement and an international audience of workers, intellectuals and youth that Joseph Hansen is not and has never been a Trotskyist.

40. In response to the interview with Sylvia Doxsee, who had combined claims of amnesia about her years in the SWP with expressions of contempt for James P. Cannon, Hansen continued his policy of lies, fabrications and evasions. He also warned that the International Committee is “refusing to acknowledge the deadly consequences the WRP now faces,” and added maliciously that “the Healyites are quite capable of initiating violence against other sectors of the labor movement...”²

41. But the only violence that occurred was directed against the Workers League. On October 16, 1977, Tom Henehan, a member of the Workers League Political Committee, was assassinated as he supervised a Young Socialist dance. Not a single Pabloite organization in the world denounced this political murder.

42. Hansen died suddenly on January 18, 1979, exactly one week after he had attended the meeting of the SWP Political Committee that expelled Alan Gelfand for filing an *Amicus Curiae* (“Friend of the Court”) brief in support of the Socialist Workers Party’s lawsuit over the infiltration of agents during the COINTELPRO program. Gelfand’s brief argued that the presiding court should compel the US Attorney General to identify government informants inside the SWP. Gelfand’s brief stated:

These informants certainly are not in the SWP to help build this Party. Their ultimate purpose is to destroy it. The multitude of “dirty tricks,” burglaries and thefts which have been carried out by these informants, has been well documented both in this suit as in other recent cases. Such activities overwhelmingly confirm the sinister role played by informants.

43. Gelfand’s brief was viewed by the SWP leadership as a serious threat. While its own attorneys conducted its lawsuit in a passive manner, without any intention whatsoever of forcing the exposure of agents, Gelfand was absolutely serious about compelling the government to identify and remove its agents from the SWP, which could result in the exposure of members of the SWP leadership. The SWP Political Committee decided that it could no longer delay Gelfand’s removal. The motion to expel Gelfand was advanced in the Political Committee by the SWP’s national secretary, Jack Barnes.

44. Exactly six months later, on July 18, 1979, Alan Gelfand filed a lawsuit in a Federal District Court in Los Angeles, claiming that his

expulsion had been engineered by US government agents operating in the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party. The development of the Gelfand Case will be discussed at length in subsequent lectures.

45. But two points must be stressed. First, in its efforts to discredit Gelfand, the SWP leaders persistently claimed that the aim of the lawsuit was to enable the government to decide who could be a member of the SWP. In fact, the clearly stated aim of the lawsuit was to bar the government from infiltrating the SWP leadership, and then using its control of the party apparatus to expel anyone who attempted to expose them.

46. The democratic principles asserted by Gelfand's lawsuit were explicitly acknowledged by District Court Judge Mariana Pfaelzer in her denial of the SWP's motion to dismiss the case. She wrote that "it is clear that the governmental manipulation and takeover of plaintiff's political party is a drastic interference with the associational rights of its adherents and cannot pass constitutional muster."

47. Second, there would have been no reason for the SWP leaders, had they been what they claimed to be, i.e., genuine socialists, to oppose Gelfand's lawsuit. They would have welcomed the opportunity to refute in open court Gelfand's claims of a government takeover of the SWP. But Barnes and his associates knew all too well that the lawsuit was based on irrefutable facts, and that its continuation would result in the vindication of not only Gelfand's allegations but also the entire Security and the Fourth International investigation.

48. As this case was beginning to unfold, the International Committee discovered that virtually the entire central leadership of the Socialist Workers Party were graduates of Carleton College, a small conservative institution in Northfield, Minnesota. All of these recruits, beginning with SWP national secretary Jack Barnes, were—to use the words employed by the college president Richard Gilman in an interview conducted in 1979—"plugged into" the SWP via the CIA-ridden Fair Play for Cuba Committee.

49. I will not attempt to summarize here the course of the Gelfand Case, which spanned almost four years. This will be the subject of several lectures later this week. However, I must emphasize that the outcome of the case was the total substantiation, in the form of sworn depositions and legally verified documents, of the evidence uncovered and the allegations made by the International Committee. In fact, the critical additional information obtained by Alan Gelfand and his principal attorney, John Burton, conclusively exposed the lies that had been told by Hansen, Novack and the SWP leadership about Hansen's contacts with the FBI and with the GPU. The political significance and heroic character of the struggle conducted by Alan will live forever in the history of the Trotskyist movement.

50. While preparing the school, even those who were personally involved in the investigation could not avoid being somewhat astonished by the monumental scale of Security and the Fourth International, of which the Gelfand Case is a component part. It was carried out in the face of relentless opposition, threats and even violence.

51. There is no question but that the political impulse for the initiation of the investigation came in the first instance from Gerry Healy. Having broken with the Stalinist movement in the 1930s, during the Moscow Trials and the GPU's terror campaign against the Trotskyist movement, Healy was in a position to grasp the sinister implications of Hansen's contemptuous attitude toward the security of the Fourth International.

52. When Hansen hurled against him the charge of "paranoia," Healy did not view this as simply a personal insult. Rather, Hansen's cynical dismissal of the danger posed by the infiltration of agents into the Fourth International immediately led Healy to recall the examples of Mark Zborowski and Ramon Mercader. And he asked himself how Hansen, who had actually witnessed Trotsky's assassination in Coyoacán, could dismiss the need for vigilance in the revolutionary movement.

53. Gerry Healy was certainly a "hard man." But he was of a generation that had been politically educated in the midst of the brutal events and tragedies of the 1930s. The work that led to his break with Stalinism was Max Shachtman's pamphlet *Behind the Moscow Trial*. Healy had never forgotten the warning issued by Trotsky in "An Open Letter to Workers' Organizations" issued on November 2, 1937:

Never has the labor movement had in its own ranks so vicious, dangerous, powerful, and unscrupulous an enemy as Stalin's clique and its international agents. Remissness in the struggle against this enemy is tantamount to betrayal. Only windbags and dilettantes but not serious revolutionists can confine themselves to pathetic outbursts of indignation. It is urgent to create special commissions which would follow the maneuvers, intrigues, and crimes of the Stalinists, warn the labor organizations of danger in store, and elaborate the best methods of parrying and resisting the Moscow gangsters.

54. Healy's evocation of the historical experience of the Trotskyist movement had found expression in the WRP's reply to Hansen's "Secret of Healy's Dialectics," the resolution to initiate Security and the Fourth International, and the drafting of *How the GPU Murdered Trotsky*.

55. Healy's intervention evoked a powerful response within the young cadre of the Workers League. How is this to be explained? First, the cadre of the Workers League had been won to the perspective and program of Trotskyism through the struggle that had been waged by the International Committee against Pabloism. The Open Letter written by Cannon in 1953 and the critical documents written by the Socialist Labour League in 1961-63 in opposition to the betrayal of Trotskyism by the SWP shaped the political outlook of the party cadre.

56. The emphasis placed by the International Committee on the continuity of the Trotskyist movement inculcated within the cadre of the Workers League a serious attitude toward questions of history. The sense of a deep political connection between our present tasks and the antecedent experience of the Fourth International and, beyond that, the October Revolution, the first four congresses of the Communist International, and the issues that gave rise to the founding of the Left Opposition and its subsequent struggles were present in the political consciousness of the Workers League cadre.

57. This, I believe, accounts for the determination and even ferocity with which the Workers League pursued the Security and the Fourth International investigation, even as the Workers Revolutionary Party increasingly withdrew from this struggle.

58. The concern with historical experience, political principles and the programmatic foundations of the Fourth International that formed the basis of the education of the cadre of the International Committee was the polar opposite of the crude pragmatism, opportunism and atmosphere of cynicism that prevailed within the Socialist Workers Party and the Pabloite United Secretariat (especially those sections most closely under Hansen's direct influence, such as the International Marxist Group in Britain and the Socialist Workers League in Australia).

59. The leaders of these organizations could not be swayed by the evidence uncovered by the International Committee, no matter how damning. As the ICFI statement of July 29, 1977, noted, "They are consumed with such political hatred of the International Committee that they will ride with Hansen to hell and back." Nothing else was to be expected of inveterate opportunists and self-promoting publicity seekers, like Tariq Ali, not to mention the many police agents comfortably operating under cover within the Pabloite groups.

60. But it was not only political corruption that maintained Hansen's

place in the leadership of the SWP. The middle class elements that comprised the bulk of its membership supported Hansen not out of conviction, but because they were uninterested in and indifferent to the historical experiences and political issues raised by Security and the Fourth International.

61. Preoccupied with the short-term concerns of protest politics, and, therefore, focused on applying pressure aimed at reforming the capitalist state rather than overthrowing it, the Pabloite membership saw no reason to be particularly concerned about state infiltration of its organization. The common responses given by the SWP rank and file as they brushed off members of the Workers League who circulated the statements exposing Hansen's ties to the GPU and FBI were "So what?" and "Who cares?" Another phrase that assumed the stature of a political motto among SWP members was "Agents do good work."

62. The latter piece of political wisdom was derived from the distortion promoted by Hansen of the lessons drawn by the Bolsheviks from the exposure of Roman Malinovsky, a leading member of the party, as an agent of the Okhrana, the secret tsarist police.

63. The impact of this agent on the work of the party was devastating. The information he supplied to the Okhrana led to countless arrests and deaths. In its review of the case of Malinovsky the Bolsheviks later noted that this agent, who was a leading party spokesman in the Russian parliament prior to the revolution, was compelled to deliver speeches that publicized the positions of the Bolsheviks. In order to fulfill his insidious tasks as an informer, Malinovsky unintentionally carried out certain political functions that advanced party interests.

64. But this statement was not intended as an endorsement of the role of agents inside the revolutionary movement on the spurious ground that they may do "good work." After all, once in power, the Bolshevik regime established the Cheka to combat the activities of counter-revolutionary spies. Spies were not rewarded for their unintended contributions to the revolutionary cause. As Harold Robins dryly commented on the fate of Malinovsky: "When the Bolsheviks got him, they shot him."

65. Hansen's distortion of the Malinovsky affair was designed to sow political complacency among the SWP members, to promote the idea that agents do both good and bad work, and that the former, the good work, may prove to be more important than the latter. Genuine revolutionaries do not maintain such a balanced, 50-50 percent attitude to agents and their activities. In his memoirs, Victor Serge described the police agent as a "provocateur," who "is not only an informer; he is a seducer, a strategist of ruin."

66. There was yet another argument advanced by the SWP leadership, which was accepted by its ignorant and complacent rank-and-file membership. In his letter of April 7, 1978, to Alan Gelfand, SWP leader Larry Seigle wrote: "The Party cannot and will not allow agent-baiting in its ranks." The use of this loaded term—"agent baiting," as if it were akin to "red-baiting" or "jew-baiting"—was intended to prohibit questioning of the political bona fides of any party member, regardless of evidence of associations with the police and intelligence agencies. The practical application of this rule guaranteed police agents absolute protection against exposure.

67. Over the course of a half century, the attitude to Security and the Fourth International taken by tendencies and their leaders and members has proven to be a highly accurate, even infallible, indication of their political orientation. Invariably, the denunciation of Security and the Fourth International has been closely linked to the repudiation of Trotskyism.

68. For an entire decade Cliff Slaughter and Michael Banda, leaders of the WRP, had been ardent supporters of Security and the Fourth International. They wrote numerous articles condemning those who attacked and slandered the investigation. But amid the crisis that erupted in the WRP in the summer and autumn of 1985, and as it prepared

its split with the International Committee, Slaughter and Banda—forgetting all that they had previously written—issued embittered denunciations of Security and the Fourth International. Banda, adopting the words of Hansen, described the investigation as "a manic witchhunt, a desperate forensic diversion to be precise, **to satisfy Healy's paranoid schizophrenia** as well as his anti-theory empiricism." Within weeks of composing this hysterical tirade, Banda proceeded to denounce Trotsky and declare his unstinting admiration for Joseph Stalin.

69. Slaughter endorsed Banda's denunciation of Security and the Fourth International, and supplemented it with the claim that its work had been a substitute for the theoretical struggle against Stalinism and Pabloism. The absurdity of this claim, which included an element of irony, is that it was made as both Banda and Slaughter were consciously repudiating Trotskyism. As Banda degenerated into a defender of Stalinism and an apologist for Zionism, Slaughter began his long trek to the political right that led to his repudiation of the Leninist concept of a party and the embrace of a form of petty-bourgeois anarchist humanism.

70. In answering the claim that Security and the Fourth International marked a turn away from the struggle against Pabloism and the development of Marxism, the history of the International Committee between 1975 and 1985 proves exactly the opposite. The intense involvement of the Workers League in Security and the Fourth International was inextricably linked to its defense, in opposition to the WRP, of the program of Trotskyism and the philosophical foundations of Marxism.

71. In fact, the major Workers League documents opposing the WRP's drift toward opportunism and Healy's distortion of the dialectical method were written during the most intense phase of the Gelfand case, that is, as preparations for the trial were underway.

72. Security and the Fourth International is a major chapter in the history of the Trotskyist movement. Not only have its findings withstood the test of time—a full half century—its work continues. The analysis written by Comrade Eric London of Hansen's interactions with the FBI in light of the 1941 prosecution of 18 SWP leaders and the examination of the role played by Sylvia Ageloff in the assassination of Leon Trotsky are important contributions to an understanding of the combined conspiracies of imperialism and Stalinism against the Fourth International.

73. In concluding this introduction to the international school, I must emphasize that party security is, above all, a political question. The recognition of the need for security arises from a Marxist understanding of the nature of the capitalist state, the laws of the class struggle, the character of the imperialist epoch, the objective crisis of world capitalism, and a deeply rooted commitment to the program of the party. The level of theoretical and political consciousness required to understand the complex problem of maintaining organizational security requires a highly educated and politically firm Marxist cadre.

74. The development of a revolutionary cadre requires internal relations grounded in clear political principles, enabling a regime that is democratic, disciplined, and capable of resisting state attacks. It must avoid both opportunist complacency and fear-driven hysteria. Political vigilance is incompatible with panic. The strongest defense against infiltration is a politically educated and well-informed cadre, which is essential for maintaining internal democracy and a carefully organized program of security. This is among the most vital lessons of *Security and the Fourth International*.

75. We have before us a very challenging week. The lectures will encompass a huge amount of material relating to history, politics and even law. But we are living in challenging and dangerous times, and objective events will impose huge demands upon our cadre. It is all but self-evident that the issue of political security acquires immense significance at a time when targeted assassinations and genocide have been normalized and the basic constitutional foundations of bourgeois democracy are

disintegrating. These are the manifestations of an immense escalation of class struggle on a world scale and the transition to civil war and social revolution. The purpose of this international school is to raise the political level of the cadre of the Socialist Equality Party and the ICFI to meet the challenges posed by the accelerating crisis of world capitalism and prepare the American and international working class for the conquest of power and the building of a world socialist society. Thank you comrades for your attention.



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