

2025 Summer School Lecture 6 Part 1

The Wohlforth-Fields violation of party security and the response of the International Committee

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This is the first part of the lecture “The Wohlforth-Fields violation of party security and the response of the International Committee,” delivered by Kathleen Martin and David Rye to the 2025 Summer School of the Socialist Equality Party (US) on the history of the Security and the Fourth International investigation. To accompany this and upcoming lectures, the WSWS is publishing “How the GPU Murdered Trotsky,” first published in 1981, which contains documents from the first year of the Security and Fourth International investigation. We also encourage readers to review the essay by David North, “The case of Nancy Wohlforth, a.k.a. Fields, and the origins of Security and the Fourth International.”

We've begun this year's Summer School with reports reviewing a historical timeline and context leading up to the assassination of Leon Trotsky in 1940. The specific origins of the Security and the Fourth International investigation lie in the renegacy of Tim Wohlforth and the response of the ICFI and the Socialist Workers Party. The first part of this lecture will review the role of Wohlforth, Nancy Fields, the security issues that arose in the Workers League Summer School of 1974, and the response of the ICFI to this.

The emphasis by our movement on the importance of security stood in stark contrast to the response of Hansen and the SWP, who dismissed these entirely appropriate concerns as paranoia. This precipitated the events which led to the launching of the Security and the Fourth International investigation.

Certain characteristics of this period are necessary to understand: There was massive state infiltration and operations against left-wing politics throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The extraordinary response of Joseph Hansen to the security investigation can only be understood in this context.

At the time of the crisis in the Workers League in the early to mid-1970s, relatively little was known surrounding the assassination of Leon Trotsky. The material that comrades have read in preparation for this school is the direct product of the intervention of our movement for historical truth and the fight to expose Stalinist agents in the Trotskyist movement.

Comrade David North made some of these points in opening the school, but comrades should keep in mind that Trotsky's assassination had only occurred 34 years before the August 1974 Summer School in which the crisis in the Workers League came to a head. In other words, about as much time has passed between our Summer School today and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 as between the 1974 Summer School and Trotsky's assassination in August 1940. To the younger comrades in attendance who were born after 2000, even the dissolution of the Soviet Union can seem very far removed from the present, especially

given the rapid pace and vast amount of developments of the last half decade alone. To the generation of comrades who lived through the experiences in the Workers League that we'll discuss today, the assassination of Trotsky was not at all an event in the distant past. It had happened just 34 years earlier.

For the sake of time, it is not possible to go over in great detail all of the major political events of the period between 1940 and the early 1970s. Much of this will be covered to a certain extent in the upcoming lectures, which deal with security issues as they were arising throughout the course of the Gelfand case, weaving together the exposure of agents within the Socialist Workers Party as that case was developing, and the struggle for the continuity of Trotskyism in the fight against Pabloite revisionism.

The Cold War and McCarthyism

In order to understand the significance of the massive breach of party security involved in the non-disclosure of Fields' family CIA ties, it is necessary to understand the political environment in which these issues arose.

It is no secret that the socialist movement has long been targeted for surveillance, infiltration and repression by the state. The Trotskyist movement has had to contend with threats to its security not just from the capitalist state, but also from the Stalinist bureaucracy which sought and successfully achieved the death of its principal opponent in the most consequential political assassination of the century. The last report reviewed the details of the assassination of Trotsky in 1940, and we skip ahead to the early 1970s. Comrade David said in his opening report: “The Security and Fourth International investigation transformed the historical narrative of Trotsky's assassination.” This is certainly the case, and little had been done in the period between 1940 and 1974 to investigate the underlying causes of his death.

In the interim, and of course prior to Trotsky's assassination, the state had heavily infiltrated left-wing movements in the United States during and after the Cold War. This was the period of McCarthyism, the HUAC testimonies, blacklisting and terrorizing workers and socialists, driving them out of the trade unions through intimidation and threats, and creating an overall climate of state-sponsored anti-communist hysteria. Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, perhaps the most famous victims of the Red Scare, were executed in June 1953.

Establishment of COINTELPRO

The Counter Intelligence Program, or COINTELPRO, began its formal operations in 1956 under FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, although illegal government spying on “subversive” groups deemed a threat to “national security” (or, to capitalism and American imperialism) had been functioning well before the program had an official name and long before the general public was aware of its existence and the extent to which the government was conducting mass spying operations on virtually every left-wing political group. As was later revealed, some of the documents indicated that infiltration started as early as 1941.

The subjects of government spying included the Communist Party; the Socialist Workers Party; the NAACP and the Black Panthers, as the civil rights movement also began in this period, gaining mass popularity throughout the course of the 1960s; anti-Vietnam War organizers and protesters; the National Lawyers Guild; the United Auto Workers, the Teamsters, and many other trade unions. Students who were involved in the anti-war demonstrations were also targeted and spied on even if they had no formal affiliation with a specific organization or group.

COINTELPRO was established with the explicit intent of going after communists. The American ruling class was concerned above all else with the growing radicalization of the working class and of students and youth in the postwar era, and that this radicalization would lead to revolution. It is critical for comrades to understand this because, as we will get into shortly and also in other lectures in this school, to be security conscious in the Trotskyist movement was a matter of principle. To have close family connections to the CIA, as Nancy Fields did, and not to disclose that information to the party was a massive breach of security. Tim Wohlforth had a political obligation to raise this information about his partner as soon as he became aware of it, and he didn’t. The party had a right, really a duty, to investigate these ties. To prioritize one’s personal affairs over political responsibilities compromised the security of the international movement.

In a speech to an SWP plenum on September 28, 1940, six weeks after Trotsky’s death, James P. Cannon made the following point on the need to pay much closer attention to security. Comrade Andrea Peters read this in the previous lecture:

[T]here is a certain carelessness in the movement as a hangover from the past. We haven’t probed deeply enough into the past of people even in leading positions—where they came from, how they live, whom they are married to, etc. Whenever in the past such questions—elementary for a revolutionary organization—were raised, the petty-bourgeois opposition would cry, “My God, you are invading the private lives of comrades!” Yes, that is precisely what we were doing, or more correctly, threatening to do—nothing ever came of it in the past. If we had checked up on such matters a little more carefully we might have prevented some bad things in the days gone by. (*The Socialist Workers Party in World War II: James P. Cannon, Writings and Speeches, 1940-43*)

Exposure of COINTELPRO

COINTELPRO remained a government secret until March 1971, when a group called the Citizens’ Commission to Investigate the FBI broke into an FBI office in Pennsylvania and leaked documents and secret dossiers to the media.

The exposure of the existence of COINTELPRO revealed the breadth and depth of state-sponsored infiltration, spying, harassment and disruption campaigns targeting individuals and left-wing groups. It was eventually revealed that the FBI sent hundreds of agents into the SWP alone through this program and had around 1,300 informants on its payroll.

Leaders of the civil rights movement were targeted and viciously slandered and harassed. One of the more infamous cases is Martin Luther King Jr., to whom the FBI mailed a letter encouraging him to commit suicide along with recordings of illegal wiretappings obtained from his home and personal phone lines which had been bugged.

Three months after the COINTELPRO leak, in June 1971, Daniel Ellsberg began publishing the Pentagon Papers in the *New York Times*, revealing the extent to which the public had been lied to by the government on the war in Vietnam. This further contributed to a deepening political crisis in the Nixon administration, which had attempted to block the publishing of the papers. A year after that the Watergate scandal broke, intensifying mass disillusionment with the existing political establishment and ultimately leading to Nixon’s resignation in 1974.

While the government claimed to have ended COINTELPRO after the 1971 exposure, it continued functioning, just without that name. The same practices were continually employed by the FBI, CIA and other branches of the state security apparatus. The NSA (National Student Association, not to be confused with the National Security Agency), which was monitored and funded by the CIA, was also heavily involved. The Senate Select Committee, chaired by US Senator Frank Church, investigated the illegal activities of the US government in 1975-76, in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal. Many of the records remain classified but the COINTELPRO findings included revelations with massive security implications for the Trotskyist movement in particular.

This is the context in which the crisis in the Workers League began to unfold. At the 1973 Summer School in Canada, party members discovered that the camp had been bugged with a listening device. Questions of security were no small matter.

Radicalization of workers, students and youth in the 1960s and 1970s

The period of the 1960s and 1970s can be characterized above all as one of crisis for world capitalism. The struggle of Trotskyism versus revisionism developed against the backdrop of escalating economic and political instability and conflict. The position of the United States as the supreme economic and military leader of the world in the postwar period began to weaken.

This was expressed sharply in the eruption of the massive student protest movement against the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement and its violent repression by the state, the urban uprisings in major cities in the US such as Los Angeles (1965) and Detroit (1967), and a major upsurge in the struggle of the international working class.

In 1969, about 5,700 strikes were recorded in the US. In 1970, 10 million man-days were lost to strike action. In 1974, it is estimated that approximately 16 million man-days were lost due to strikes in the United States. This figure reflects the significant labor unrest across various industries, including transportation, manufacturing and public services like the postal service.

Efforts of the ruling class to resolve the crisis of American imperialism failed, culminating in the ending of the Bretton Woods system, ending dollar-gold convertibility, on August 15, 1971. The Socialist Labor League correctly recognized that the collapse of Bretton Woods would

produce major political and economic convulsions internationally.

The political environment was contradictory. On the one hand, with the end of the Vietnam War, the protest movement had significantly waned. On the other, it was a period of explosive class battles. These issues were reflected in the political developments within the IC and the Workers League itself.

The Third World Congress of the ICFI and the development of the Workers League

Tim Wohlforth was politically disoriented by the collapse of the anti-war protest movement and resorted to frenetic activism instead of deepening the political and theoretical struggle against Pabloite revisionism, which played a major role in radical politics. He turned away from the battle of Trotskyism against Pabloite revisionism out of which the Workers League itself had emerged.

The ICFI had held its Third World Congress in April 1966 to consolidate existing support for genuine Trotskyism in its sections throughout the world, and to lay the groundwork for the expansion of this work, in opposition to Pabloite revisionism. The continuity of Trotskyism and the Fourth International was at stake.

Based on that Congress, the American Committee for the Fourth International founded the Workers League in November 1966. Wohlforth himself had played an important role in the fight against the SWP in this period and along with eight others had been expelled from the SWP for demanding discussion of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party's (LSPP) betrayal in Ceylon. Working with the IC, Wohlforth co-founded the American Committee for the Fourth International in 1964 and, in 1966, he became the first national secretary of the Workers League. Comrade Fred Mazelis became the assistant national secretary.

It is worth noting at this point that many comrades who joined the Workers League in the early 1970s, who remained in the movement and are here at this school today, were won to the program of the party based on the principles that had been defended in this period. They had strong convictions about the program of the ICFI and strong connections to the history of Trotskyism in the US. This was a generation of young people coming into politics in the postwar era. The Second World War and its consequences left a major impression on and shaped the political consciousness of this generation. Wohlforth was one of the main political figures in this struggle. He had taken up the fight in the SWP against revisionism. He was a senior leader in a movement with relatively young and inexperienced cadre operating during times of great economic and political crisis.

In a November 1966 letter to the First National Conference of the Workers League, Gerry Healy sent warm international greetings and encouraged the ACFI to continue the fight against the revisionists and to turn to the working class. He wrote:

The working class in the United States are the most powerful in the world and it is within this class that you must build your party.

This is a basic principle of Marxism and one which applies with particular urgency to the conditions existing inside the United States. It is not Black power or the dozens of peace and civil rights movements which extend throughout the country which will resolve the basic questions of our time but the working class led by a revolutionary party.

It is at this point that we separate ourselves completely from the revisionists. We emphatically reject their idea that the negroes by

themselves as well as middle class movements can settle accounts with American imperialism. Whatever critical support we are called upon from time to time to extend to such movements the essence of our support must be based upon making clear our criticism of their shortcomings.

The growth of the Workers League

The Workers League experienced significant growth throughout this period of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Workers like Jim Lawrence, who joined in 1972, were won to the program of Trotskyist internationalism.

In May 1970, the National Guard opened fire at a protest against the Vietnam War at Kent State University in Ohio, killing four students and wounding nine others. The main concern of the US government at that point was preventing the kind of situation that had developed in 1968 in France, where workers and students joined forces and paralyzed the country in May-June. The OCI in France, which had supported the position of the Socialist Labor League at the 1966 Congress, was changing its line by 1967, arguing for "reconstruction" of the Fourth International. By 1968, it played a significant role, along with the Pabloites, in blocking the potentially revolutionary situation that had emerged in France from further development.

Wohlforth comes under criticism

The Attica Prison riot took place in September 1971. As we recount in *The Heritage We Defend*:

No one in the Workers League would deny the contribution made by Wohlforth in the early years of the organization. However, the breakup of the middle-class anti-war protest movement in the early 1970s, to which much of the practical activity of the Workers League during its early years had been oriented, threw Wohlforth into a deep political crisis. In 1972 Wohlforth came under sharp and correct criticism within the International Committee for weakening the Workers League's long-standing programmatic orientation to the working class, through the fight for the formation of a Labor Party based on the trade unions.

Looking for something to replace the waning anti-war movement, and reacting impressionistically to the events surrounding the September 1971 uprising at Attica prison, Wohlforth decided to focus the party's work on the political radicalization of prison inmates. For weeks on end, the pages of the party's press were turned over to publishing letters from prisoners, and Wohlforth developed the theory that the penitentiaries were becoming the main centers for the development of Marxism!

He came under heavy and correct political criticism from the IC for this at the Fourth Congress held in April 1972. However, the political instability of Wohlforth was made worse by the lack of political clarification of the reasons for the split with the OCI. Wohlforth initially adapted himself to these criticisms but ultimately did not break with an

orientation to petty-bourgeois politics. This deepened over the course of the next year.

In early 1973, Wohlforth proposed inviting the Spartacist League to an open and public debate on the history of the Fourth International. This was in spite of opposition within the Workers League and without consultation or discussion with the International Committee.

“To publicly invite this group, seven years later, to engage in debates on the history of the Fourth International, could only mean, as Wohlforth’s subsequent evolution proved, to call the finality of that break into question,” David North wrote in *The Heritage We Defend*.

Wohlforth traveled to England in the summer of 1973 where he faced further criticism for his adaptation to the Spartacists. It was evident to Healy that there were serious political problems arising within the Workers League, and he warned Wohlforth and members of the leadership to “avoid factionalism and subjectivism like the plague,” in a July 18, 1973 letter. He wrote:

Let us start from the present political situation. Watergate represents the high point of the political crisis within the US ruling class. It represents their reactions to the insoluble nature of the economic crisis. In essence it means that the most powerful group believe if anything that Nixon is too weak to deal with the coming working class upsurge in the USA.

This situation reflects the great movement that is coming within the working class, and that is the root of the crisis within the Workers League. The theoretical preparations of the International Committee to meet this crisis is contained in the 20-year-old break from Pabloism and our continuous struggle to fight it out against the way in which this brand of revisionism emerges within the working class movement.

The wrecking operation of Wohlforth and Fields

The radical student movement was winding down drastically in the lead-up to the Paris Peace Accords of January 1973. The military draft ended that June. Responding to pressures in the objective political situation and incapable of dealing with the correct criticisms from Healy on the Spartacist League debate, “Wohlforth lost whatever was left of his political equilibrium and initiated a political wrecking operation inside the Workers League, which, within the space of one year, nearly destroyed the entire organization,” North wrote in *The Heritage We Defend*.

Wohlforth had just begun his personal relationship with Fields before his trip to England in the summer of 1973. She volunteered to work as a proofreader in the party’s central office in New York City, citing experience at *Time* magazine. Fields presented herself as an organizer of exceptional talent and boasted of her ability to sell subscriptions to the *Bulletin*. In spite of her lack of knowledge of Marxism and history of the Trotskyist movement, she was elevated into a position of leadership based on her personal relationship with Wohlforth. She became Wohlforth’s right-hand organizational hatchetman, traveling to branches throughout the country, making impossible demands of members, breaking up branches and treating the cadre of the movement terribly.

Fields’ abusive and erratic behavior was a manifestation of objective problems that existed in the Workers League in this period. She employed subjective administrative methods to deal with these political challenges and issues. To give a taste of the disdain Fields had for the cadre of the party and the history of the movement, and of how she dealt with political pressures, I’d like to relay a couple of anecdotes from comrades I spoke

with in preparing this lecture.

At one point Fields demanded that a party member get an abortion while five months pregnant. Other women in the party who wanted to start families either left or felt the need to lie about their pregnancies in order to stay out of Fields’ crosshairs.

Another example: The Young Socialists held a conference in May of 1974 and Jean Brust was asked to participate. Comrade Jean was a founding member of the Workers League with vast political experience who had joined the Trotskyist-led Young Peoples Socialist League as a teenager in 1937. She planned to travel from Minneapolis to be able to attend the conference. Comrade North asked Fields who would pick up Jean when she arrived and Fields replied: “Let the old bag find her way to New York.” This is not the attitude or language keeping with tradition in the Trotskyist movement.

I cite these examples not to expose salacious details on the personal lives of members, but to paint a portrait of the very toxic atmosphere that was beginning to dominate the Workers League.

The impact of the wrecking operation

The wrecking operation on the Workers League by Wohlforth and Fields could have destroyed the American section. By the summer of 1974, the Workers League was decimated. They had driven out approximately half of the party membership. In discussions with members of the generation who lived through this, a common sentiment was that members could sense that something was terribly wrong, but it was not totally clear what was happening—and would not become clear until the Summer School of August 1974. Comrades resented the brutal treatment doled out by Wohlforth and Fields, who, as described in *The Fourth International and the Renegade Wohlforth*, “jetted around the country to the tune of thousands of dollars in a wrecking operation the likes of which had never been seen in the Workers League. … The so-called ‘national tours’ of Wohlforth and Fields had more the character of a honeymoon than a political intervention.”

Comrades must keep in mind that in this period, there was no Signal. There was no social media, no cell phones, no internet, no texting or email. I think it is easy to take for granted the communications available to us today that were not accessible even 20 years ago, let alone in the early 1970s. Today, sections of the IC can correspond with one another instantaneously. Comrades working in various branches can collaborate with one another and be in touch on a regular basis. We hold party aggregates where we take reports from branches and hear from members everywhere. We publish material on the *World Socialist Web Site* six days a week from our sections throughout the world. This was simply not possible in the 1970s. It took much longer to receive correspondence from international members, and it was costly to make international phone calls. All of this is to raise that it was not easy for the IC, and even for members of different branches in the American section, to have a sense of the scope of destruction that was taking place throughout the party.

In the space of one year, between the summers of 1973 and 1974, virtually the entire youth leadership resigned. Most of the intellectuals and academics left the movement. The Central Committee and Political Committee were reduced by half, severely impacting the staff of the *Bulletin*, as mentioned earlier on Freeman’s resignation. The work in the trade unions suffered immensely, although the party continued to cover the struggles in the working class, including the Harlan County coal miners strike of 1973-74, in spite of reprimands from Wohlforth who discouraged the trips to Kentucky.

In a letter from Wohlforth to Healy in July 1974, he reported:

some 100 people have left the League. This figure refers only to people in the party for some time and playing important roles, not those who drift in and out, the usual sorting out of membership ... We are virtually wiped out as far as intellectuals are concerned—one big bastardly desertion. What is done on this front I have to do along with Nancy. We have nothing more in the universities—and I mean nothing.

Wohlforth gives his own account of this episode in his 1994 book, *The Prophet's Children*, an incredibly subjective gossip-filled telling of his "travels on the American left."

By the time this book was published, nine years after the 1985-86 split with the WRP, Mike Banda and Cliff Slaughter had long abandoned principled revolutionary politics and had been engaged in mud-slinging campaigns against Healy after expelling him from the WRP when Healy's abuse of cadre came to light. Wohlforth asks in his book (referring to the British section): "How is it possible that intelligent and talented people with personal strength and courage allowed themselves to be verbally and physically abused in this manner?" This, of course, did not apply to himself or to his companion Fields, as he categorically rejected any responsibility for the atmosphere he helped to create and allowed to flourish in the Workers League.

He writes:

The losses in late 1973 and early 1974 came from the central leadership of the Workers League, people who had been with us for years. They included my former wife, Karen, Dennis, Lucy (St. John), Jeff, and Danny (Freeman). No wonder I was sick with worry. I had struggled for years in difficult times alongside these comrades, these friends, and none of them could or would explain why they were dropping out. Perhaps they did not know themselves. Still accepting the perspectives of the Workers League, they may have seen their own resignations as personal failures rather than as the result of *too much frenetic activity in the service of a false perspective* (emphasis added).

In other words, the problem was the false perspective of Permanent Revolution, of Trotskyism, which Wohlforth would soon enough denounce after deserting the movement to which he had dedicated a significant portion—14 years—of his own life.

The Fifth World Congress of the ICFI

In May 1974, the ICFI held its Fifth World Congress in London. The Congress included international delegates from countries that were conducting their political work and operations under conditions of illegality and military dictatorship, including Peru, Greece and Spain, where Franco was still in power.

Wohlforth decided to bring Fields with him to this Congress even though she had zero qualifications for this assignment. This decision was made on the basis of their relationship only. Healy had been aware of the great losses in the Workers League leading up to the Congress, but Wohlforth's own account gave personal rather than political reasons for this.

Keerthi Balasuriya, the general secretary of the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL) and Sri Lankan delegate to the IC Congress,

expressed concern that the Workers League's previous co-delegate had apparently resigned, but again, this was brushed aside by Wohlforth. Fields was not known to any of the international delegates.

Fields' exposure and Wohlforth's trip to England

Healy traveled to Canada in May of 1974 to attend a National Committee meeting and had been made aware in general terms of the organizational crisis in the Workers League, although in mostly apolitical terms. Fields was also in attendance at the NC meeting. A few months later, Healy was contacted by Jacques Vielot, who was on a trip to England on his own after having resigned from the Workers League. Vielot described in great detail the devastating impact of the chaos wreaked on the movement.

Vielot's account raised serious alarm bells with Healy, who had been concerned about Fields' attendance at the IC Congress and quick elevation into the party leadership while being not very well known among the members and completely unknown to the IC. He also noted that her rise into leadership coincided directly with the timing of her personal relationship with Wohlforth the previous year, after leaving her first husband Neil Freuden—who had also resigned from membership—and she herself having joined the Workers League only a couple years prior.

It was not outside the realm of possibility to suspect that it was possible, even probable, that the Workers League had been the subject of government infiltration. After all, the 1973 Summer School had been bugged. It was becoming clear that the 1971 COINTELPRO exposure, shocking as it was, was just the tip of the iceberg. Many unanswered questions still surrounded the assassination of Trotsky. There was nothing "paranoid" or bizarre about Healy's concern.

Healy immediately contacted Wohlforth and asked him to travel to England to discuss the state of the Workers League. At a meeting of the Political Committee of the WRP on August 18, Healy directly asked whether Wohlforth had any reason at all to believe it was possible that Fields could be connected to police or intelligence agencies. Wohlforth insisted that he did not.

Healy moved forward with an inquiry into Fields' background regardless and Wohlforth traveled back to the US with less than a week until the Workers League Summer School. In the meantime, Vielot contacted Freuden, Fields' first husband, who stated that she had basically been raised by her uncle, Albert Morris, a high-level official in the government who worked for the CIA's IBM computer division. Wohlforth himself knew this and did not disclose it, even when asked directly by Healy.

The August 1974 Summer School

The leadership of the Workers League, still unaware of the international discussions and Fields' family connection to the CIA, had less than a week upon Wohlforth's return before the Summer School in Canada, which had essentially been unprepared in terms of its content and lectures.

The leadership of the WRP, primarily Healy, Banda and Slaughter, intervened and insisted that everyone who had resigned over the course of the last year be contacted and asked to attend the school. The WRP would assist in preparing and delivering lectures since nothing had been planned.

Half of the membership was gone. Members who managed to hang on through the disorientation of the wrecking operation had been instructed to recruit among inner-city youth, mostly to bring attendees to the school, many of whom were not really clear what they had signed up for when they agreed to attend. There was hardly any food at the camp. Fights were breaking out. It became clear very quickly that the situation was going to become unmanageable. Some members had been assigned multiple shifts of 24-hour guard duty just to try to keep things in order.

Slaughter arrived first and picked Healy up from the airport to bring him to the camp. Upon his arrival, Healy found Wohlforth and gave him a copy of an initial report produced by Vielot and others which proved Fields' background and connections to the CIA.

The Central Committee meeting and the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry

Healy, "just an international guest" who "ignored proper procedure," according to Wohlforth (again from his 1994 book), called and chaired a meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers League on August 30-31 to discuss the breach of security during the Summer Camp, which had so far shaped up to be a disaster.

Healy began the meeting by asking what was going on in the Workers League and one by one, Central Committee members began to report the chaos and mass exodus from the movement over the course of the previous year. To this point, none of the issues had been discussed out in the open. "It's Christmas time, comrades," Healy said. "Everyone can speak."

Notably, in spite of the poor treatment of members, there was no expression of subjectivism toward Wohlforth, who still maintained a certain reputation in the movement because of his role in founding the Workers League and in the fight against Pabloism.

On August 31, the second night of the Central Committee meetings, Healy asked whether anyone was aware of Fields' connection to the CIA. It is important to note that there was no accusation that Fields herself was an agent. The central issue was whether anyone had been made aware, and why there was no declaration of this connection.

We have stated many times in the past that members are not themselves responsible for the lives of their family members. But members are obligated to report such connections upon joining the party.

This was a major violation of party security and the Central Committee acted on it accordingly. They voted to temporarily remove Wohlforth from his position as national secretary and to suspend Fields from membership pending a further investigation into her background. Wohlforth and Fields both voted in favor of this resolution. A Commission of Inquiry was set up to conduct the investigation which would proceed as promptly and thoroughly as possible. Comrade Fred Mazelis, working with Banda and Slaughter, began the investigation.

The resignation of Wohlforth and Fields

The Commission of Inquiry was conducted in accordance with the vote and proceedings of the Central Committee meeting of August 30 and 31. However, before the results of the commission were produced, and before the commission could even formally meet, Fields disappeared and Wohlforth had resigned within a month, in spite of the fact that they themselves had both voted for the resolution.

Wohlforth submitted a letter of resignation to the Political Committee of the Workers League on September 29, 1974, citing among other issues his opposition to his removal as national secretary and to the suspension of Fields on the basis of interference by the IC. In his letter he also stated that he would not cooperate with an "inquisition," i.e., with the Commission of Inquiry.

Upon receiving the letter of resignation, Slaughter wrote to Wohlforth on October 6 urging him to reconsider. In this letter, Slaughter corrects the historical record and the subjective, dishonest mischaracterization of the August 30 and 31 meetings of the Workers League CC.

He responded objectively and methodically to the points in Wohlforth's cited reasons for resignation, including the accusation that the IC set out to change the leadership of the Workers League and that the Commission of Inquiry was an "inquisition," which Wohlforth maintained post-desertion, including in his later books.

You choose to ignore the security questions, which can be cleared only by the most detailed and responsible investigation, and condemn the inquiry as an "inquisition" set up to "dig up" evidence to justify the August 31 decisions. This you must withdraw.

[W]e must finally draw your attention, as a comrade who has been in the forefront of the struggles of the IC, to the political and theoretical implications of your letter. [Y]ou refer to the CC's decision on NF: "taken only because of the intervention of the IC."

As a comrade who has had to fight against the anti-internationalism of Cannon and Hansen, then Robertson, you must surely pull up sharp when you re-read these words. With this phrase you lower yourself to the level of that narrow national American pragmatism, which sees the International only as an appendage to your own immediate purposes.

With such an appeal, you deny your own past struggles and appeal to the worst elements around the movement, and particularly to hostile groups waiting to attack and destroy it. Every rotten petty-bourgeois revisionist concentrates his attack on the alleged authoritarianism of the IC and defends his national independence.

Slaughter ended the letter with an appeal to Wohlforth to reconsider and change his position to collaborate in the work of the commission.

Findings of the Commission of Inquiry, November 9, 1974

On September 15, 1974, the IC held a meeting to discuss the security breach and to begin the commission investigation, even though Wohlforth and Fields refused to participate. The commission met in New York from October 24 until November 2 and took statements from 22 members and former members.

The inquiry concluded and reported its findings on November 9. It stated:

The inquiry established that from the age of 12 until the completion of her university education, NF was brought up, educated and financially supported by her aunt and uncle, Albert and Gigs Morris. Albert Morris is the head of the CIA's IBM

computer operation in Washington as well as being a large stockholder in IBM. He was a member of the OSS, forerunner of the CIA, and worked in Poland as an agent of imperialism. During the 1960s a frequent house guest at their home in Maine was Richard Helms, ex-director of the CIA and now US Ambassador in Iran.

The report states that there was “no evidence to suggest that NF or TW is in any way connected with the work of the CIA or any other government agency,” while maintaining that the conditions in the Workers League were fundamentally a product of the failure of Wohlforth, as the national secretary, to break from pragmatism: “This obstructed and eventually collided with the political foundations of the Workers League, which is its relationship with the IC.”

The report recommended that Wohlforth withdraw his resignation and maintained that he had the right to run for the position of national secretary at the party’s upcoming 1975 conference. It also found that, while Fields herself was a “highly unstable person who never broke from the opportunist method of middle-class radicalism,” her suspension was lifted with the condition that she not hold any position in the Workers League for two years.

It also stated that Wohlforth bore ultimate political responsibility for creating conditions in which Fields could carry on as she did, as he himself had brought her into a position of leadership and turned to this relationship as a solution to the difficulties facing the Workers League at a time of major economic and political crisis.

The commission concluded:

The inquiry urgently draws the attention of all sections to the necessity of constant vigilance on matters of security. Our movement has great opportunities for growth in every country because of the unprecedented class struggles which must erupt from the world capitalist crisis. This situation also means that the counterrevolutionary activities of the CIA and all imperialist agencies against us will be intensified. It is a basic revolutionary duty to pay constant and detailed attention to these security matters as part of the turn to the masses for the building of revolutionary parties.

This emphasis on the importance of security stood in stark contrast to the response of Hansen and the SWP, who dismissed these entirely appropriate points as paranoia. Wohlforth’s own dismissal of political security and investigation as a form of “madness” was followed up by Hansen’s publication in *Intercontinental Press* of “The Secret of Healy’s Dialectics,” which precipitated the events which led to the ICFI’s investigation into Security and the Fourth International. This we will review in the next section of this lecture, by comrade David Rye.



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