

The publication of “How the GPU Murdered Trotsky” and the initial Findings of Security and the Fourth International - Part 1

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This is the first part of the lecture “The publication of ‘How the GPU Murdered Trotsky’ and the initial findings of Security and the Fourth International” delivered by Andre Damon and Tom Hall, 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 lecture, the WSWS is publishing the final sections of “How the GPU Murdered Trotsky,” first published in 1981, which contains documents from the first year of the Security and Fourth International investigation.

The year 1975 was an inflection point, both in the capitalist crisis and in the history of the Trotskyist movement. In the United States, the year 1975 followed the Watergate crisis, the resignation of Richard Nixon, the defeat of American imperialism in Vietnam, and the deepest economic crisis since the Great Depression, in which an unemployment rate of 9 percent combined with soaring inflation. The dollar, the linchpin of the global economy, was reeling from its deepest crisis of the postwar period with the collapse of the Bretton Woods system.

The year 1975 was also a turning point in the history of the revolutionary Marxist movement. In the 2019 Socialist Equality Party Summer School, David North proposed a periodization of the history of the Trotskyist movement into five stages of development. The third stage began with the publication of the Open Letter by James P. Cannon in November 1953 and concluded with the suspension of the British Workers Revolutionary Party from the International Committee in December 1985.

This period has been described as a 30-year-long civil war within the Trotskyist movement between the forces of orthodox Trotskyism and Pablo revisionism.

If we use this analogy, the launch of the Security and the Fourth International investigation was a key and decisive battlefield victory in this civil war—a turning point, in which the forces of world political reaction—imperialism and its Stalinist agents—suffered a decisive setback. It is a cruel irony of history that Gerry Healy and other leaders of the WRP played an exemplary and leading role in the initiation of this investigation, under conditions in which he would, over the course of the next decade, repudiate these very principles of international Trotskyism.

The first year of the Security and the Fourth International Investigation reaffirmed the fundamental principles of Trotskyism and the continuity of Marxism. It firmly rooted the International Committee in a struggle to assimilate the history of the Trotskyist movement.

The initial findings of the Security and the Fourth International investigation were published in late 1975 under the title, *How the GPU Murdered Trotsky*, containing the findings of the first year of the inquiry.

It unveiled the existence of a spy ring within the leadership of the Trotskyist movement that had been active throughout the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s—and remained active up to the launching of the investigation.

In order to grasp the significance of these findings, it is necessary to examine the perspective of the generation undertaking the investigation. Trotsky had been killed just 35 years prior. As comrades David North and Kathleen Martin pointed out in their respective remarks to this school, this is the same amount of time that separates us from the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Trotsky’s murder took place at the beginning of the Second World War. That cataclysmic war had come and gone, bringing after it the Cold War, dominated by the effort by American and world imperialism to crush all resistance by the working classes and oppressed masses all over the world. In the minds of the imperialists, the beating heart of all resistance to their domination was the Soviet Union.

Throughout the 1950s, official American politics had been gripped by McCarthyite allegations of rampant Soviet spy networks operating within the US government, cultural institutions, and military. The McCarthyite claim that America’s foreign policy defeats, including the Chinese revolution and the stalemate in the Korean War, were caused by communist infiltration into the American government was a massive exercise in social hysteria, with no basis in fact.

But to promote their witch-hunt, the McCarthyites used as their pretext the very real crimes committed by the agents of Stalinism, both in Europe, and the United States, including the murders of leading Trotskyists.

The hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee, the trials of the Rosenbergs and Alger Hiss, and the testimony of Whittaker Chambers were front page news throughout the 1950s.

As this lecture will review, the arrest of Mark Zborowski and the Soble brothers also made front-page headlines, including prominent reports of their penetration of the Trotskyist movement and Zborowski’s role in the murder of Leon Sedov.

While the American state used these trials and hearings to whip up an anticommunist frenzy, they actually revealed critical information about the spy network that carried out the assassination of Leon Trotsky and remained active in the surveillance and disruption of the Trotskyist movement.

But as the Security and the Fourth International investigation would make clear, no serious work had been done within the Trotskyist movement to systematize the new information that had become publicly available since the 1950s, and to carry out a serious investigation based on this new information.

The publication of *How the GPU Murdered Trotsky* in 1975 represented a discharging of that historical debt—with interest. The investigation not only systematically assimilated the information that had become publicly available over previous decades but extended it with the exposure of the connections of Joseph Hansen to the GPU and FBI, which itself led to the exposure of a decades-long cover-up by the SWP.

Pabloism and Security and the Fourth International

The year 1975 marked a quarter century since the publication of the book by Louis Budenz, *Men without Faces*, which asserted categorically that the GPU had placed a high-level agent inside the Socialist Workers Party—Sylvia Franklin. And yet the membership of the SWP was denied the knowledge of this agent as the result of a systematic cover-up by its leadership.

Comrade Fred Mazelis joined the Socialist Workers Party on New Year's Day 1960 and was expelled at the end of June 1964. During that time, as he explained,

We didn't know who Sylvia Franklin was. When I was in the SWP, I never heard the name Sylvia Franklin... It was a non-issue. If you had asked anybody who had been around at that time, you would hear, "Oh yes, Sylvia. She was a rank-and-file member who had been secretary to Jim, that's all."

What explains the failure of the US Trotskyist movement to systematically assimilate the material that had become publicly available on the penetration by the GPU within its ranks? The answer, in the final analysis, is rooted in the pervasive influence of Pabloite revisionism.

It is a basic historical fact that the Security and the Fourth International investigation became a line of demarcation between the forces of orthodox Trotskyism and those of Pabloism. Universally, the orthodox Trotskyists sought to expose the crimes of Stalinism, in order to substantiate, in concrete and undeniable detail, Trotsky's allegation that Stalinism was the "gravedigger of the revolution." In fact, the material presented by the Security and the Fourth International investigation substantiated this claim, one grave at a time. The investigation revealed how the Stalinists functioned as an organized international criminal syndicate, doing the bidding of global imperialism, to systematically murder the leadership of the revolutionary movement.

The Pabloites, by contrast, sought to falsely ascribe a revolutionary content to a mythical "self-reform" of the Stalinist bureaucracy. In order to promote this fundamentally false conception, they did everything possible to conceal the historical crimes of Stalinism, and the actual, material facts of the operation of the Stalinist bureaucracy. The fact that the Comintern had been transformed into a front for a cabal of murderers drawn from the criminal underworld—who remained active through the present day—was an inconvenient truth to the leading Pabloites.

As the ICFI's 1990 obituary of Mark Zborowski explained,

Mandel and Pablo had very definite political considerations for their refusal to engage in the kind of systematic exposure of the crimes of the GPU on which Trotsky had always insisted. They had developed, from 1949 on, a political perspective which held that the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union had demonstrated, through the overturn of capitalist property relations in Eastern Europe, that it could play a revolutionary role. They claimed that Stalin's death in 1953 had opened the way to a process of "self-reform" of the bureaucracy which made Trotsky's perspective of the violent overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy outdated. The exposure of the bloody work of the Stalinist secret police against the Trotskyist movement—a record covered up then

by Khrushchev and still suppressed today by Gorbachev—was politically inconvenient.

Moreover, it is likely that GPU agents, including some of those involved in the GPU network which organized the assassination of Trotsky, were still on active service within the Fourth International. These agents certainly did not want an investigation into the role of Zborowski which could raise uncomfortable questions which might lead to their own exposure.

And yet, these "uncomfortable questions" were raised. The publication of *How the GPU Murdered Trotsky* set into motion a series of events that would ultimately lead to the split with the Workers Revolutionary Party, the founding of the *World Socialist Web Site*, the Socialist Equality Parties, the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees, the essential preparation for the world socialist revolution.

The method of the investigation

The linchpin of the Security and the Fourth International investigation was the re-examination of the circumstances surrounding the assassination of Leon Trotsky. The assassination of Trotsky in August 1940 by an agent of the Soviet secret police, the GPU, was "the crime of the century." It represented the most consciously directed attack by the combined agencies of world imperialism against the revolutionary Marxist vanguard of the working class. Trotsky, as co-leader of the 1917 October Revolution and founder of the Fourth International, personified Bolshevism and the World Revolution. Even in his exile, the specter of Trotsky haunted Stalin, demonstrating the vast material power of Trotsky's ideas.

The preface to *How the GPU Murdered Trotsky*, published in 1981, rooted the Security and the Fourth International investigation in the struggle for the fundamental principles of Bolshevism.

Security and the Fourth International, the investigation launched by the International Committee of the Fourth International in May 1975 into the circumstances surrounding the assassination of Leon Trotsky, is a historic conquest of the working class and a milestone in the construction of the World Party of Socialist Revolution.

It is both the continuation and the culmination of the struggle waged by Trotsky, co-leader of the 1917 October Revolution and founder of the Fourth International, to expose the crimes of Stalinism and rid the international workers' movement once and for all of its counterrevolutionary legacy. In exposing the police agents who now lead the US revisionist Socialist Workers Party, the International Committee is settling historical accounts with the whole apparatus of counterrevolutionary violence employed by the combined state agencies of imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy against the Fourth International.

In referring to Security and the Fourth International as an "investigation," it must be grasped that this word only partially embraces the full political and historical content of the struggle waged by the International Committee during the last six years. Like Trotsky's exposure of the Moscow Trial frame-ups of 1936-38, it is the highest conscious expression of the objective movement of the working class against the bourgeoisie and all its agencies.

The Cold War and the material available to the investigation

The International Committee of the Fourth International has always insisted that the assassination of Leon Trotsky was not merely a historical milestone, but an event of vast contemporary, living significance. And this was proven in practice by the findings of the investigation. Starting with an examination of the assassination of Trotsky, the ICFI unwound a Stalinist and imperialist conspiracy that continued to the present day. As the 1981 introduction to *How the GPU Murdered Trotsky* explained:

the Stalinist agents who had organized the assassination of Trotsky did not leave the scene after the murder had been executed. Rather, they set about to organize its cover-up, so that the murder machine that had been used to eliminate Trotsky could remain in operation. This proceeded with the active support of the American government, which, despite its persecution of American Stalinists during the cold war, encouraged GPU agents to join forces with US intelligence agencies against their common enemy: Trotskyism.

After the end of the Second World War the relationship between the US and Soviet intelligence operations changed. The ICFI's obituary of Mark Zborowski explained the growing intersection between the operations of the GPU and the US intelligence agencies:

The anti-Trotskyist spy apparatus of the GPU, in which Zborowski played such an important part, was in large part taken over by the intelligence agencies of US imperialism during the late 1940s and 1950s. After the end of World War II and the end of wartime cooperation between the Soviet bureaucracy and American imperialism, the position of the GPU agents operating inside the United States changed. During the war, the United States government did not object to the sabotage carried out by the Stalinists against the Trotskyist movement. After all, the US government had sent the entire leadership of the Trotskyist movement to jail on charges of sedition. However, with the onset of the Cold War and the bourgeoisie's fear that its "atom secrets" were being stolen by the Soviet Union, Washington decided to put the screws on GPU activities in the United States.

The most important GPU spymasters were arrested and their espionage rings were broken up. The lower-level operatives were usually given the choice of collaborating with the FBI or going to jail or facing even more dreadful punishment. One of the aims of the Rosenberg frame-up and executions was to convince GPU operatives that they would be well-advised to collaborate. Thus, while the most prominent GPU controllers, such as Zborowski and his cohorts Soble and Soblen, were neutralized with criminal prosecutions and imprisonment, their agents, particularly Joseph Hansen, fell under the jurisdiction of new controllers from the FBI and CIA.

Media revelations before Security and the Fourth International

Jack Soble was a pivotal operative of the Soviet secret police (GPU),

known by his party name Senin, who played a significant role in extensively infiltrating the Trotskyist movement.

Soble met Leon Trotsky in Prinkipo in 1931 and again in Copenhagen in 1932, reporting these interactions to his GPU contacts. He also provided reports on Trotsky's son, Leon Sedov. Trotsky engaged in a relentless and "irreconcilable" struggle against the "Well-Senin clique" within the German section, which ultimately led to their public break with the Left Opposition and their return to the Soviet Union in 1933.

Soble arrived in Philadelphia in December 1941. Upon his arrival, he was quickly reactivated by the GPU. He became the head of an anti-Trotskyist spy network in New York, consisting of approximately ten members. His network collected "pure Trotsky material," including minutes of Political Committee meetings and correspondence, and he reported names of American Trotskyist sympathizers to the Stalinists.

The members of Soble's network included Mark Zborowski, his principal agent, whom he met in 1943, as well as Sylvia Franklin, Floyd Cleveland Miller, and Lucy Booker.

On January 24, 1957, the FBI arrested Jack Soble, in a story that made front-page headlines throughout the United States. The AP cited FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover as saying, "Soble was picked up as he made plans to leave the country."

He was tried and convicted of perjury in New York District Court in 1958. During the trial, Soble provided extensive testimony that exposed details of the GPU's anti-Trotskyist network in the United States. Soble directly identified Sylvia Franklin and Mark Zborowski as GPU agents under his control. He testified that he transferred all his agents in the Trotskyist movement to his brother, Robert Soblen, in 1945-1946.

Soble served five years of his seven-year sentence and was released in September 1962. After his arrest, Soble repeatedly testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee and gave interviews to the press revealing his penetration of the Trotskyist movement.

In an exclusive 12-part interview series with Hearst reporter Jack Lotto that began to be serialized on the front pages of major US newspapers in November 1957, Soble wrote:

My services for the Soviet secret police went back to 1931... The job was to spy on Leon Trotsky for Josef Stalin, who was obsessed with the idea of knowing everything his hated rival was doing and thinking even in exile. And I was selected for this task for two reasons—first, I was one of Trotsky's most trusted followers, there from Berlin to visit relatives.

For two years, in 1931 and 1932, I spied on Trotsky and the men around him. Trotsky, suspecting nothing, invited me to his heavily guarded home at Prinkipo, Turkey. I duly reported back to the Kremlin everything Trotsky told me in confidence, including his pungent remarks about Stalin.

The assignment ended suddenly one day when Trotsky called me in and in a fit of rage told me he had discovered what I was up to. He said:

"You will one day regret what you are doing. I never want to see you again."

I never again did see Trotsky, who was assassinated in Mexico in 1940.

One of the main GPU spies under Soble's control was Mark Zborowski, also known by his party name, "Etienne."

Zborowski fled France after the Nazi invasion and arrived in Philadelphia on December 29, 1941. After Zborowski arrived in the United States, he immediately resumed his role as a Soviet secret police agent. He received significant assistance in this transition from Lola

Estrine (Mrs. David Dallin), who secured his release from a Vichy concentration camp, facilitated his immigration via Lisbon, paid his fares, found him lodging in New York, and helped him obtain his first job.

Despite prior suspicions raised by the Alexander Orlov letter about "Mark" being an agent, Zborowski became active in a spy network in New York City, operating under the direction of Jack Soble, who had also immigrated to the US in December 1941 and was reactivated by the GPU. Meetings of the Fourth International's leadership, which had moved to New York during wartime, were even held in Zborowski's living room.

Zborowski's primary function in the US was gathering information aimed at infiltrating and disrupting the Trotskyist movement. He cultivated key sources like Lola Estrine and Jean van Heijenoort, a former secretary to Trotsky and later the international correspondence secretary of the Fourth International. There were weekly or bi-weekly meetings in 1942 and 1943 to exchange information on European refugees and Trotskyist activities.

Concurrently with his clandestine activities, Zborowski built a public academic career. He held positions at institutions such as the Yiddish Scientific Institute and the American-Jewish Committee, and engaged in teaching and research at Columbia University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cornell Medical College, and Harvard University.

In 1952, he published *Life Is With People*, a study of Eastern European small-town Jewish culture, funded by the Office of Naval Research.

Zborowski's double life was exposed in December 1954, when General Alexander Orlov, the NKVD defector who had previously tried to warn Trotsky, located him in the United States and reported him to the FBI. He was repeatedly questioned by the FBI and testified publicly before the Senate Subcommittee on Internal Security in 1956.

During that hearing, Zborowski said he knew Stalin personally read his reports. "I heard about it, yes," he said.

On April 21, 1958, he was indicted for perjury for denying under oath his acquaintance with Jack Soble, and was subsequently tried, convicted, and sentenced to five years in prison.

When Zborowski was arrested on perjury charges on April 1958, the Associated Press cited FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover as saying, "Zborowski's link with the Sobles was another development in the FBI's scrutiny of the 'clandestine activity' of Soble, Zibilin, former general in the NKVD [secret police] and the Soviet embassy in Washington."

The AP report noted, "The Justice Department said that in March 1956 Zborowski told the Senate internal security subcommittee that he had carried out assignments for the Soviet secret police in France in the 1930's.... But he said he had ended those activities before he came to America."

The same day, Hearst reporter Jack Lotto reported, "Mark Zborowski, who was seized by the FBI Monday on perjury charges, for 25 years was a trusted Soviet secret police agent whose spy reports were read personally by Stalin."

Lotto added:

This fabulous college-educated agent, known as "Etienne," posed as an anti-Communist to cloak his operations. While in this country Zborowski engaged in legitimate anthropology work at Columbia University with such famed researchers as Dr. Margaret Mead, and in undercover activities with convicted spymaster Jack Soble. He later moved to Harvard.

Scar-faced Zborowski was closely connected abroad with many prominent anti-Stalinists and Soviet secret police bosses who fled Russia.

He had the assignment of luring many of them to assassination spots.

Zborowski was so trusted by the Trotskyites that he was able to

become the bodyguard of Gen. Walter G. Krivitsky, high-ranking Soviet intelligence agent who defected.

Krivitsky was found dead with a bullet hole in his head in his Washington hotel room in 1941 in a mystery never solved.

Brown-eyed Zborowski, a graduate of two colleges, also befriended—and reported to Stalin on—exiled Leon Trotsky's son, Leon Sedov, and was finally ordered by Soviet police to put Sedov on the spot. Sedov died of a mysterious ailment a short time later. Zborowski was among those at his bedside.

When Trotsky was transferred secretly from Norway to Mexico—where he was hatcheted to death—Zborowski was one of two people entrusted with the information.

On November 30, 1960, Dr. Robert Soblen, the brother of Jack Soble, was arrested in New York. The Associated Press reported:

Dr. Robert Soble, a supervising psychiatrist at a big mental hospital, was arrested Tuesday as a member of a wartime band of Soviet spies headed by his brother, now imprisoned...

Dr. Soble, 60, uses that name although his legal name is "Soblen." He is a brother of Jack Soble, 57, serving a seven-year prison sentence since 1957 for espionage. Dr. Soble faces a possible death penalty.

Eighteen other persons were named in an indictment with Dr. Soble as co-conspirators in the case.

Critically, the news report on the arrest of Robert Soblen noted that Sylvia Callen, Floyd Cleveland Miller, and Lucy Booker were also named as unindicted co-conspirators. Their names were placed on the front pages of countless local newspapers throughout the United States, which carried dispatches about Soblen's arrest from the Associated Press.

While the indictment of Soblen was only referenced in these media reports, the ICFI was subsequently able to obtain the full document in the course of the investigation.

In December 1962, Zborowski was convicted of perjury and sentenced to three years in prison, in an accomplishment that FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover prominently mentioned in his annual report to attorney general Robert F. Kennedy.

Zborowski submitted to the *New York Times* magazine, and had published, an article entitled "The Prison 'Culture'—From the inside" that noted that the author was an "anthropologist (convicted on a security matter)." The *Times* did not disclose the fact that the American government claimed the pseudonymous author was an accessory to multiple political assassinations.

Zborowski's description of his internment seemed to boast about the comfortable conditions at the minimum security prison where he served out his sentence alongside what he claimed were lawyers and millionaires who fell afoul of the law. He almost seemed to be laughing at the millions of people still interned in the system of Stalinist concentration camps, including those put there by his activities. He wrote,

"This was no Hollywood Big House with towering gray walls and searchlights that pierced the night. Trees and flower beds brightened the yard. The windows were not barred, but had unobtrusive steel frames. Instead of numbered cell blocks, we lived in "houses" named after a city or state in the East. Individual cells were "private rooms," and as residents in a minimum security prison our doors were usually unlocked."

Zborowski was released in October 1964. With time off for good behavior, he had served just one year and ten months. After his release he moved with his family to the West Coast, living out his life in San

Francisco.

Following his release, Zborowski resumed his academic career and published *People in Pain* (1969), a study of responses to pain by people of different cultures. He moved to San Francisco, where, in time, he rose to the position of Director of the Pain Institute at Mount Zion Hospital.

Zborowski's name was added to the US Security Index in 1971 because of his "long record of involvement" as an active Soviet agent in operations that resulted "in the murders of Trotsky, his son, Ignacz Reis, and possibly Walter Krivitsky."

The following year, in September 1972, the San Francisco office of the FBI recommended Zborowski's name be removed from the security list because he was no longer considered "A current danger to national security." The FBI closed his case in 1972.

In the period following his release, Zborowski received continuous, widespread, and favorable press, which was uniform in its failure to accurately report his criminal conviction and the allegations by the US government that he was an accessory to murder. In newspaper accounts following his release, "scar-faced Zborowski," the murderer, became "white-haired Zborowski," the elder scholar, who was universally referred to as Dr. despite never having received a doctorate. His pronouncements on everything from medical practices to Jewish culture were prominently reported.

The January 18, 1972 issue of the *San Francisco Examiner* quoted Zborowski as an advocate for "pulling the plug" on terminally ill patients, without mentioning his role in the medical murder of Leon Sedov.

"Anthropologist Advocates need for Jewish Hospitals" wrote the *St. Louis Jewish Light* on November 29, 1972, next to a smiling picture of Zborowski.

"Group of doctors focus on pain," read one dispatch from June 1975, which extensively quoted the "Doctor" Zborowski, as a "medical man," making generalizations about Jews and Italians being vocal about pain.

Major turning points in the Security and the Fourth International investigation

None of the material from the mainstream news publications presented here is intended to in any way diminish the significance of the findings of the investigation in 1975. Rather, it is intended to emphasize the scope of the cover-up that the SWP leadership engaged in. Sylvia Franklin, the personal secretary of James P. Cannon, had been named FIFTEEN years prior on the front pages of multiple American newspapers as a Stalinist agent. And yet the Pabloites claimed that anyone who took this issue seriously was "paranoid."

In fact, the voluminous character of the documentary evidence available points to the sea change that took place in 1975. The launching of the Security and the Fourth International investigation marked a definitive and decisive repudiation of the political climate that had allowed figures such as Hansen to operate freely within the Trotskyist movement.

The ICFI began systematically investigating the transcripts and documents of the trials of the Soble brothers and Zborowski, the records of the assassination of Trotsky, and seeking to locate the key figures associated with the penetration of the Trotskyist movement.

In August 1975, David North of the Workers League located Zborowski outside his home in the fashionable San Francisco neighborhood where he lived. North photographed Zborowski with his wife Regina. Zborowski attacked North while Regina threatened, "You can do nothing with these pictures if you know what's good for you."

Not one other organization claiming to be Trotskyist reproduced these photographs.

Throughout much of 1975, a major portion of the work of the investigation consisted of systematically working through materials that had already been published in major media outlets, then buried. This was combined with research in the US national archives, which unexpectedly found a document that indicated that Joseph Hansen, who was in charge of security at Trotsky's household, had for months met with an agent of the GPU.

Just eleven days after Trotsky's assassination, Hansen, then Trotsky's secretary, visited the US. Embassy in Mexico City on a Saturday morning. He met with US. Consul Robert G. McGregor Jr., an intelligence officer assigned by the State Department to monitor communist activities. The initial report of this meeting, dated September 1, 1940, was sent by Consul George P. Shaw to the U.S. Secretary of State.

During this meeting, Hansen revealed information he had never before told the Trotskyist movement: that he was approached by a GPU agent ("John") in New York in 1938. Hansen claimed that he referred the matter to Trotsky, who allegedly asked him to "go as far with the matter as possible." According to Hansen, he maintained relations with this "John" for three months without the agent revealing his real identity.

On October 28, 1975, a statement by the International Committee of the Fourth International, titled, "We accuse Joseph Hansen and the Socialist Workers Party," declared,

Much of the material that was used to compile our interim findings is publicly available in the United States, from government archives and the Library of Congress. But the SWP leaders have never paid any attention to these documents, nor published them for the political education of the Trotskyist movement and the working class. They have consciously and deliberately concealed them because to bring them into the open would be to reveal their own carelessness of security which in its own tragic way, in our opinion, contributed to Trotsky's untimely death.

One document in particular raises questions about Hansen himself. It is a statement that he made to an FBI agent who was operating under diplomatic cover at the American Embassy in Mexico City. Hansen made a statement to him on August 31, 1940, 11 days after Trotsky had been killed by the GPU agent, Ramon Mercader.

Until now, nothing had been known of Hansen's visit to the US Embassy. In all the florid and dramatic writings he published after Trotsky's death, he did not mention it. But it must have been an important conversation since it took place on a Saturday when embassies are normally closed.

At the embassy Hansen met FBI man Robert G. McGregor who had been closely following events at the Trotsky household since the abortive shooting raid led by Stalinist painter, David Siqueiros. The American Consul, George P. Shaw, sent a record of the conversation to the US State Department in Washington on September 1.

Hansen's statement to the embassy came to light when the International Committee of the Fourth International examined official government records which are now available for public inspection in Washington. The full text of McGregor's conversation with Hansen reads:

Mr. Joseph Hansen, secretary to the late Mr. Trotsky, came in on Saturday morning in order to discuss matters connected with the assassination of Mr. Trotsky. I told him of my desire to be in possession of as much information as possible regarding the relationship of the assassin and Miss Sylvia Ageloff with the

United States.

Hansen repeated his assertions that this crime was engineered from the United States. He pointed to the fact that Mornard (the assassin) had made a journey to the United States between the dates of the first attempt upon Trotsky's life and the second successful one. He declared that undoubtedly the desk clerk at the Hotel Pierpont in Brooklyn could give some information and seemed to attach considerable importance to the packages that Sylvia states Mornard kept in the safe at the hotel. Hansen likewise believes that the Ageloff family could furnish some valuable information as to who Mornard saw while on his last trip to New York.

It is Hansen's opinion that Mornard himself will be unable to give much more authentic information concerning names of persons acting as his principals in this matter. For, while Hansen is convinced that the murder is a GPU job, that very fact makes it hard to unravel. Hansen stated that when in New York in 1938 he was himself approached by an agent of the GPU and asked to desert the Fourth International and join the Third. He referred the matter to Trotsky who asked him to go as far with the matter as possible. For three months Hansen had relations with a man who merely identified himself as "John," and did not otherwise reveal his real identity.

Robert G. McGregor
American Consul

The statement continued, "Joseph Hansen has still to explain what he was doing in the American Embassy on a Saturday morning one week after the assassination of Leon Trotsky. He must explain why he gave information to FBI man Robert G. McGregor in the embassy that no one in the Fourth International knew about until the International Committee investigation discovered previously unknown State Department documents."

Hansen's claim directly contradicted Trotsky's lifelong practice of publicly unmasking Stalin's terror network, as demonstrated by the Dewey Commission. In the words of *How the GPU Murdered Trotsky*:

Is it seriously suggested that Trotsky, the leader of the Red Army, would ask a relatively inexperienced newcomer from Salt Lake City to infiltrate the most skilled terror machine of the GPU? What could have been the purpose of this infiltration? There are no published records to show that Trotsky evinced an interest in infiltrating the GPU. On the contrary, his whole struggle was to publicly unmask Stalin's terror network as he successfully did in the Dewey Commission. If Hansen was carrying out unspecified work on behalf of the movement with the GPU agent, surely it would have been brought to light later as further evidence of the devious and sinister attempts at GPU penetration. This could have been publicly stated at any time after 1938 since presumably Hansen was no longer doing this work when he arrived in Mexico. It was not Trotsky's practice to keep the schemings of the GPU a secret. It was to lay them bare before the Fourth International and the working class. There is no public record of his instructions to Hansen on the GPU agent "John." (Who is he?) Nor did Trotsky mention it to US Consul McGregor, the FBI man, when he visited Coyoacan on May 24, 1940, hours after the Siqueiros raid and the disappearance of Sheldon Harte.

Hansen's assertion of having Trotsky's permission was further

undermined by the complete absence of any record in Trotsky's writings, and the denial of all surviving SWP leaders from that period.

In reality, the "John" that Hansen met with was GPU spymaster Gregory Rabinowitz, who played a critical role in the GPU penetration of the Trotskyist movement.

The findings of the investigation

Lola Estrine (Dallin) played a central role in the penetration of the Trotskyist movement by GPU agents, principally Mark Zborowski, whom she called her "Siamese twin."

Estrine's assistance to Mark Zborowski extended beyond the initial cover-up of his GPU activities. After the fall of Paris to the Nazis in May 1940, Zborowski, then interned in Vichy, sought to escape war-torn Europe and enter the United States. Estrine played a critical role in facilitating his relocation. She met him in Toulouse, aiding him in obtaining a visa through the American consul in Bordeaux.

Upon his disembarkation in Philadelphia, Estrine was present to ensure his smooth entry into the country, finding him lodging in New York and helping him secure work. This consistent support further implicates her in the network that aided GPU agents.

Once in the United States, Zborowski immediately resumed his GPU activities within the Fourth International and the Socialist Workers Party. From 1943, his handler was Jack Soble (who had used the party name Senin in Germany), another long-term GPU agent. Estrine remained Zborowski's closest political confidante and staunchest defender until the 1950s. She provided him with introductions into various circles, crucial for his continued infiltration.

Her husband, David J. Dallin, was a recognized US-based author and expert on Soviet affairs, co-authoring works such as *Soviet Espionage* (1955), and was subsequently revealed to be an FBI agent. Lola Dallin actively collaborated with him on these books, raising significant questions about her purported ignorance of Soviet espionage, given her husband's expertise and her own deep involvement with known agents. Jack Soble himself testified that Zborowski regularly supplied him with extensive information about the Menshevik movement, including details concerning Professor David Dallin and his wife, Lola.

Another key figure in the GPU network was Sylvia Franklin, also known as Sylvia Caldwell and Sylvia Callen, who served as James P. Cannon's private secretary from 1938 to 1947. Her role was pivotal, making her, as the findings of the investigation put it, a "key link in the chain of GPU agents who carried out the assassination of Leon Trotsky."

The SWP was first informed of Franklin's role at a private meeting in 1947 with Max Shachtman and Albert Glotzer, who gave Cannon a detailed description of the alleged Stalinist spy in his office. The SWP held a brief and unserious internal investigation which purported to clear Franklin, but soon after she left the organization.

The first public exposures of Franklin's role came from Louis Budenz, an ex-Stalinist and FBI informer. In 1950, Budenz exposed a spy in the SWP National Office in his book *Men Without Faces*. The *Militant*, the SWP's weekly journal, initially publicized Budenz's revelations in 1947, from an earlier book, *This Is My Story*. However, their coverage "abruptly disappeared" when Budenz named Franklin as a GPU spy. Budenz later reinforced his claims by submitting a sworn affidavit to the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) explicitly naming Sylvia Franklin as a GPU agent.

Further evidence came from Jack Soble, another GPU master spy, who gave detailed testimony about the anti-Trotskyist spy network he controlled in New York during the 1940s. In the 1958 trial of his brother,

Dr. Robert Soblen, Soble explicitly identified Cannon's secretary as a GPU agent:

Soble: There were people—there was a secretary of Cannon, who was a secretary of the Trotskyite organization at that time here in the States who had been one of the secretaries working for the GPU. I never recruited her; I never introduced her. The GPU introduced her to me.

Floyd Cleveland Miller, also known by his aliases Michael Cort and Hal, was a Stalinist agent who successfully infiltrated the Socialist Workers Party. Miller's career as a GPU agent was extensive and significant. During World War II, he wrote regular articles on military affairs for the SWP's magazine, *Fourth International*, under the name Michael Cort. One of Miller's assignments for the GPU was infiltrating an American seaman's union, the Seafarers International Union, where he became the editor of the union paper. In this capacity, Miller was responsible for betraying the names of Trotskyist seamen who sailed on ships to Soviet ports like Murmansk and Archangel.

Miller was involved in a wiretap operation, where he and an associate tapped James Cannon's home telephone for approximately one year, with his wife's assistance in recording conversations.

Miller's GPU activities also included a six-week trip to Mexico, partially financed by Jack Soble. During this time, he lived in Leon Trotsky's house. His initial supervisor was a man known as Joe, later identified as Gregory Rabinowitz. Later, Jack Soble became his regular contact, meeting him frequently, sometimes weekly. In late 1945, Soble's brother, Dr. Robert Soblen, took over as Miller's controller.

The role of Harold Robins

Harold Robins played a pivotal and indispensable role in the Security and the Fourth International investigation, serving as a crucial living link to Leon Trotsky and providing firsthand accounts that helped expose the cover-up of the GPU's penetration of the Trotskyist movement.

In the spring of 1975, the International Committee of the Fourth International contacted Robins, who had served as the captain of Trotsky's guard in Coyoacan, Mexico. Robins immediately agreed to meet with ICFI representatives, expressing an eagerness to discuss the Coyoacan security setup and the May and August 1940 attacks, which had troubled him for 35 years.

During these initial meetings, Robins revealed critical details concerning the security arrangements around Trotsky:

He discovered that, under Joseph Hansen's supervision, most guards lacked firearms training. Robins himself had never fired a gun before arriving in Mexico, but after a few months, he initiated intensive training, and the guards became expert marksmen.

He also observed that all weapons possessed by Trotsky's guards on May 24, 1940, had jammed due to being issued the wrong ammunition—apparently by Joseph Hansen.

Robins found it strange that Hansen introduced new guards to local brothels immediately upon their arrival in Mexico City.

He provided vital testimony about his immediate actions after Trotsky's fatal injury on August 20, 1940. Robins was the first to respond to Trotsky's anguished appeal for help, bursting into his study, felling assassin Ramon Mercader with a blow to the head, and seizing Mercader's .45mm automatic pistol. He then systematically delivered

blows to Mercader's ribs until the killer confessed that he had attacked Trotsky because "they've got my mother" (they being the GPU). For years, this admission was the sole definitive evidence of Mercader's Stalinist agency, as Mercader regained his composure after police arrived and made no further incriminating statements.

Robins consistently emphasized the profound historical significance of Trotsky's murder and the role of police agencies in the class struggle. He believed that without understanding the historical meaning of Trotsky's death, the necessary political retribution could not be realized.

Robins was particularly critical of Joseph Hansen's role and the Socialist Workers Party's (SWP) official accounts, viewing them as a deliberate cover-up.

Robins directly challenged Hansen's account of security in Coyoacan, stating that Hansen's supervision permitted an "absolutely inexcusable violation of elementary security" for Trotsky. He opposed Hansen's claims that Trotsky disliked elaborate security, opposed screening visitors, or wanted to be left alone with callers. Robins countered that Trotsky showed detailed interest in security measures.

Robins specifically challenged Hansen's version of events immediately following Trotsky's assassination. Hansen wrote that he and Robins arrived at Trotsky's office door at the same time, with Hansen going to help Trotsky while Robins subdued the assassin. Robins disputed this, stating that he was first on the scene to disarm and subdue Mercader.

In December 1975, Robins issued an open letter to the SWP National Committee, demanding that they publicly repudiate Hansen's "inexcusable and politically criminal response" to the ICFI's proposal for an inquiry into Trotsky's assassination. He argued that Hansen's forthright rejection of such an investigation was unjustified, especially since the SWP had never documented the recollections of Trotsky's bodyguards.

He vehemently disagreed with the SWP's portrayal of him as "paranoid" for raising security concerns, equating it to the Stalinist slander against Trotsky of having a "persecution mania."

Harold Robins' dedication stemmed from his lifelong commitment to the struggle for Trotskyism, which he joined in the 1920s. He was a working class militant who had served a prison term for union activities. His experiences with Trotsky profoundly impacted his political and intellectual development. For Robins, the assassination of Trotsky was an event of vast historical significance that demanded understanding and vengeance. He believed it represented the "bloody reflex action of world imperialism" working through Stalinist agents to strike at the "brain of the working class."

Conclusion

Ten years ago, the Pabloite historian Susan Weissman asserted that the Security and the Fourth International investigation was a "bizarre sectarian smear campaign against Joseph Hansen."

"Bizzare." "Sectarian." "Smear campaign." Contained in each of these phrases is the outlook presented by James Robertson at the 1966 conference of the ICFI, in which Robertson declared, "We take issue with the notion that the present crisis of capitalism is so sharp and deep that Trotskyist revisionism is needed to tame the workers... Such an erroneous estimation would have as its point of departure an enormous overestimation of our present significance..."

If the investigation of the subversion of the Trotskyist movement is "bizarre," it is because, as Robertson insisted, the crisis of capitalism is not "so sharp and deep" that the subversion and physical annihilation of the Trotskyist movement is a critical defense mechanism of the capitalist

order.

But the facts revealed by the Security and the Fourth International investigation refute these myths of the petty-bourgeois worldview. The undeniable reality is that both the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union and the American capitalist state went to vast lengths to surveil, disrupt, and destroy the Trotskyist movement.

Moreover, their agents within the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party undertook a decades-long conspiracy to cover up their actions. This cover-up was decisively and publicly exposed and refuted in 1975 and would be further shattered in the following years of the investigation.

The events we have reviewed, the Stalinist terror and its cover-up, have plumbed the depths of perfidy, capitulation, murder, lies and betrayal. Zborowski in particular is the lowest type of human being: The sociopathic cynic, who justifies murder with a laugh, a half-hearted lie, and a crooked smile. The natural impulse is to pinch your nose and look away in disgust.

But we cannot look away. The hallmark of the Marxist movement is to be guided not by feeling, but by historical necessity. We take to heart the adage that “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” The world Trotskyist movement, the International Committee of the Fourth International, is determined not to forget the past. That is the meaning of this school.

While we are dedicated to the proposition that the tasks that confront mankind in the 21st century are those that confronted it in the 20th, we are committed to making sure that the horrors of the 20th century will not be repeated in the 21st. We are that future generation that Trotsky spoke of, who will cleanse the life of man from “evil, oppression, and violence.” The Security and the Fourth International investigation, and this school in its own right, are milestones in this great struggle.



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