

Summer School Lecture 7 Part 2

Joseph Hansen's reply to Security and the Fourth International

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28 October 2025

This is the second 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. Part 1 is available here. To accompany this lecture, the WSWS is publishing “The Indictment: Accomplices of the GPU” first published on January 1, 1976, which charged SWP leaders Joseph Hansen and George Novack with being accomplices of the GPU due to their decades-long cover-up of Stalinist agents’ penetration of the Trotskyist movement.

Hansen's reply to “How the GPU Murdered Trotsky” was published on November 14, 1975 in *The Militant*, under the title “On Healy’s investigation—what the facts show.”

Hansen’s method in replying was a combination of lies, slanders, sarcasm and evasions. Spanning sixteen and a half pages, it is more tirade than political statement. But if there is one unifying thread underlying all of it, it is that Hansen provides cover, on every point, for the GPU assassins who murdered Trotsky.

Hansen begins by arguing that only sectarians could be interested in uncovering those responsible for the political crime of the century and exposing the “river of blood” separating Stalinism from genuine Marxism.

He attacks the IC for launching the investigation instead of conducting more “practical” work like adapting to the union bureaucracy and the student movement, as the Pabloites were doing. Hansen writes with sarcasm:

What put the Healyites on this kick? Why should a small isolated group of would-be revolutionists consider it more important to denounce the attacks of Joseph Hansen than to bring the message of socialism to workers marching in Washington, D.C., against the depression? Why should they consider it more important in Boston to “accuse” Joseph Hansen than to participate in a discussion with militants from all over the United States on how best to counter the murderous attacks of lynch-minded racists? Clearly they consider it a matter of vital importance.

Thus, Hansen brushes off the struggle to expose the murder of Trotsky as just the preoccupation of a small sect of “would be revolutionists.”

Hansen here is appealing to the political cynicism of the Pabloites and the wider revisionist milieu. For them, the investigation of Trotsky’s murder is directly at cross-purposes with more immediate, “practical” tasks, whose real political content was the liquidation of Trotskyism.

On a more basic level, they did not care. Who could be interested in such things? A hallmark of middle-class radicalism is its profound indifference to historical questions.

In 1940, during the struggle against the Burnham-Shachtman tendency, Trotsky summed up the attitude of petty-bourgeois radicals as “a disdainful attitude toward theory and an inclination toward eclecticism; disrespect for the tradition of their own organization; anxiety for personal ‘independence’ at the expense of anxiety for objective truth; nervousness instead of consistency; readiness to jump from one position to another; lack of understanding of revolutionary centralism and hostility toward it; and finally, inclination to substitute clique ties and personal relationships for party discipline.”

Hansen combines his dismissal of the investigation with a subjective attack on the ICFI, saying what he calls its “fixation” on security is the result of “paranoia” and “insanity.” He continues to lie about the Workers League’s control commission inquiry into Nancy Fields, claiming there was “no evidence whatsoever” and that Healy had “acted on pure suspicion.” He attempts to connect the investigation with what he alleges is a history of violence and brutality against political opponents.

His argument, which would be found so “convincing” by virtually every revisionist group, bore all the hallmarks of a Stalinist provocation, in its hysterical tone and its accusations of “violence” in order to cover his own tracks and to prepare the ground for even more provocations.

The basic elements of Hansen’s article are as follows:

- First, that Sylvia Franklin was not an agent and that to suggest otherwise is slander;
- Second, that Floyd Cleveland Miller’s informing on Trotskyist mariners during World War II was of no importance;
- Third, he opposes reopening the question of Robert Sheldon Hart in the Siqueiros raid;
- Fourth, he evades a discussion of the role of Mark Zborowski;
- Fifth, he attempts to “explain” his meeting with the FBI by claiming it had the blessings of people who are not alive to corroborate his story, and makes no attempt at all to explain his meeting with the GPU, and;
- Sixth, Hansen falsifies Trotsky’s own attitude towards security, as well as Lenin’s, in order to justify his attack on Security and the Fourth International.

One of the most remarkable elements of Hansen’s article is his defense of Sylvia Franklin. By this point there was more than enough evidence to state definitively that she was a GPU agent. This included:

- The information that had been forwarded to the SWP by the Shachtmanites;
- The two books by Louis Budenz and his 1950 testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee;
- Her being named in the Robert Soblen indictment as a co-conspirator,

and;

- The testimony of Jack Soble during that trial, which named her as one of his 10 anti-Trotsky agents in the 1940s.

Hansen lies about this evidence, claiming that the sole basis for the allegation is the so-called “slander” of Budenz. He writes: “It is true that Max Shachtman relayed to the leadership of the SWP what he had heard about the rumors being circulated by Budenz.”

But he is lying when he says that Shachtman simply repeated allegations by Budenz. Rather, Shachtman came to the SWP with separate information, which came directly from a reliable source.

In early 1947, the SWP certainly saw Budenz as a credible witness. The party responded to the publication of his book *This is My Story* with extensive coverage in *The Militant* and a public campaign to demand that Budenz be called to testify before a grand jury about all he knew of GPU penetration into the Trotskyist movement.

But this suddenly stopped in May 1947, after Shachtman forwarded his information on Franklin to the SWP. Three years later, Budenz published his second book, *Men Without Faces*, which, without naming Franklin, contained specific and detailed information which clearly implicated her. James P. Cannon responded to the book by denouncing Budenz as a slanderer and claiming that Franklin had been exonerated by a control commission.

Cannon’s statement was published in August of 1950; three months later, Budenz gave extensive testimony to HUAC about Franklin, from how she was first recruited out of the Communist youth movement in Chicago to the estimation of GPU master spy Gregory Rabinowitz that her work was “invaluable.” *The Militant* never reported on this.

In what would become an infamous passage, Hansen writes:

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

Hiding behind Cannon’s reputation, he argues that to assert that Franklin was an agent would be to implicate the founder of American Trotskyism in a cover-up.

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

In 2018, the WSWS published the record of the SWP Control Commission’s interview with Sylvia “Caldwell” for the first time. In it, she admitted personal connections to the Communist Party that she had previously concealed from the SWP leadership, including that she was married to Stalinist Zalmond Franklin and that she had been a member of a Stalinist-aligned student organization, the National Students’ League. Franklin’s parents, she told the SWP, “were either communists in ideology or just on the fringe of the Communist Party.”

This vastly understates Franklin’s ties. In fact, Zalmond Franklin came from a family of prominent Milwaukee Stalinists. His father, Samuel Franklin, was a local leader of the North American Committee to Aid

Spanish Democracy, a Stalinist-aligned group. Both Zalmond and his father fought together in Spain.

Had the SWP decided to launch an investigation, it would have quickly discovered this through information which was publicly available at the time, including local newspaper items.

But the SWP did not pursue the investigation. Instead, it covered it up. This was a colossal error in judgment. It not only compromised the party’s security, but also politically compromised its struggle against Stalinism and American imperialism.

In defending Franklin, Hansen was continuing a decades-long cover-up. The refusal to concede her role was absolutely remarkable. Why were they doing this? It suggested that far more was at work here. Indeed, throughout the investigation, the SWP continuously insisted on Franklin’s innocence, no matter how much evidence continued to pile up.

The SWP itself was aware of how tenuous its position was. In 1977, Tim Wohlforth, by now a member of the SWP’s National Committee, sent a letter to Jack Barnes, in which he wrote:

Both Nancy [Fields] and I have thought considerably about the latest material from Healy on Caldwell and its implications ... it appears to me now highly probable that Sylvia Caldwell was a GPU agent. We now look a little weak still claiming she isn’t. Granting the probability that she was—then what does it prove?

It would later emerge what the reason for this was. Maintaining the fiction of Sylvia Franklin’s innocence was necessary to protect another former GPU agent in the SWP: Joseph Hansen.

Hansen is willing to grant that Floyd Cleveland Miller, as opposed to Franklin, was an agent. But he claims the impact of his work in identifying Trotskyist sailors was negligible. But why else would the GPU want the names of Trotskyist sailors entering Soviet ports, if not to kill them or to prepare the murder of others?

But Hansen brushes this off as unimportant. He adds:

The Healyites parlay this assertion of a Stalinist agent into the question: “How many seamen died on the high seas or disappeared in the Russian ports because Miller had tipped off the GPU in advance of their arrival?”

He replies: “The answer is ‘none.’”

With this, Hansen covers up Stalin’s continued campaign of murder against the Fourth International during the war. In one tragic case, Trotskyist Walter Held, who was attempting to reach Asia to escape to the United States, was intercepted and killed by the GPU in transit inside the Soviet Union. A more complete picture of the incredible persecution of the Trotskyist movement during World War II can be found in *The Heritage We Defend*.

Hansen declares off-limits the IC’s attempt to revisit the role of Robert Sheldon Harte in the May 1940 raid. He accuses the ICFI of reviving “slanders” in the Stalinist press against Harte. In the course of this, he waves away information that Harte’s father was a personal friend of Hoover, that the FBI’s operations in Mexico were placed at his disposal to look for his missing son, reports that Harte had an autographed photograph of Stalin in his room and a Spanish language dictionary signed by Siqueiros, the leader of the assault.

Hansen replies: “The most this material shows is that Harte was born in a wealthy, conservative family, that he had become radicalized, and that he hid his revolutionary views from his family. The type is not unknown

today.” In other words, the unanswered questions about Harte simply should not be pursued.

After the end of the Soviet Union, the release of the Soviet spy cables, known as the Venona Papers, proved that Harte had been an agent. But even as of 1975, the IC had not been the only ones to raise questions about his involvement.

Others included:

- Then-SWP leader Albert Goldman in an article published in October 1940, less than two months after Trotsky’s death;

Isaac Deutscher in his Trotsky biography,

Former Mexican Chief of Police Leandro Salazar and Julian Gorkin in their book *Murder in Mexico*, which included damning information implicating Harte;

Harold Robins;

Belgian Pabloite Georges Vereeken;

Isaac Don Levine, author of *Mind of an Assassin*; and,

Socialist revolutionary and former Left Oppositionist Victor Serge.

Perhaps most significantly, Hansen’s reply evades the role of Mark Zborowski, whose role was extensively detailed by the investigation. Here is all of what he writes on the matter:

The Healyite “investigators” devote considerable space to Mark Zborowski, the GPU agent who penetrated the Trotskyist movement in 1934 and gained the confidence of Leon Sedov, Trotsky’s son.

Under the name “Etienne,” he helped publish the *Bulletin of the Left Opposition* and participated in the day-to-day work of the small center of the Fourth International in Paris. Zborowski was implicated in the mysterious death of Leon Sedov in a Paris hospital on February 16, 1938.

Insofar as smearing the SWP is concerned, this operation must be written off as a dry well.

And that is all. Hansen, apparently reasoning that the less said about it, the better, immediately switches topics, evading a serious discussion of the issue.

Far from a “dry well,” this was a gushing sewer of state infiltration which not only prepared the assassination of Trotsky but set the stage for the FBI’s takeover of the SWP in the 1960s.

Hansen’s account is such a massive understatement of Zborowski’s role in the assassination of Trotsky, Leon Sedov and other top leaders that it amounts to a cover-up. At best, Hansen is willing to admit, Zborowski was only ever implicated as “possibly” being involved in the death of Sedov.

This too, is a continuation of a decades-long silence by Hansen and the SWP, including their failure to cover Zborowski’s Senate testimony and perjury trial in the 1950s.

One perfunctory article written by Hansen in April 1956 reviews the publication of new information about Zborowski in the liberal journal *The New Leader*. Hansen downplays the revelations and presents Zborowski as a marginal, previously unknown figure. “Did Mark Zborowski, co-author of a popular ethnic study of Jewish life in Poland … participate in Stalin’s organization of the murder of Leon Trotsky and his son Leon Sedov?” he begins the article.

Hansen claims repeatedly throughout that no important new information about the murder of Trotsky has been unearthed, declaring there is a “paucity of new information” and that Zborowski’s own statements are “vague.”

Significantly, Hansen pretends not to have known about the Orlov letter, writing that the admissions were “forced from Zborowski” because of

revelations that an unknown person had “tried to warn Trotsky that the Kremlin had succeeded in placing an agent high in the organization of the Fourth International in Europe.”

To repeat, Hansen knew more than he was letting on. He knew about the Orlov letter implicating Zborowski at the end of 1938, and how Trotsky attempted to convene an investigation into it.

A May 1939 follow-up letter by Trotsky suggests that Hansen may have sought to bury the issue. Trotsky complains that he “never received any information about the results of the investigation” into Zborowski and that “I wrote about the matter to Joe [Hansen] … but I fear that I was not explanatory enough.”

Hansen concludes his 1956 article: “It thus *appears* [emphasis added] that Zborowski is a genuine NKVD agent who was deeply implicated in Stalin’s campaign of murder against the Fourth International.” Only appears!

While admitting that Zborowski knows more than he had admitted to, Hansen does not raise the demand that he be forced to testify about everything he knows of Trotsky’s murder. Instead he blandly concludes the article, “the little he has confessed adds one more piece to the mountain of evidence condemning Stalin as the most sinister figure that history has yet seen. Truth marches slowly but it does march on.”

Finally, we get to Hansen’s account of his August 31, 1940 meeting with the FBI in Mexico. Hansen starts, as he so often does, by deflecting. He points to times where McGregor had shown up at Trotsky’s villa, in order to suggest that there was nothing unusual about his own visit to the US consulate. But Trotsky’s meetings were not secret, and the Security and the Fourth International investigation had already dealt with them in its initial report.

Hansen claims that the practice of ingratiating himself with the American consulate came from Trotsky. He says he had sent him to the US consulate before, with instructions to “play poker with them” in order to gain the trust of the American diplomats. This account would be vigorously disputed by Harold Robins. “Hansen has Trotsky saying something which is so un-Trotskyist … that’s Hansen. That’s not Trotsky.”

Hansen claims that his August 1940 meeting was conducted with the approval of both Trotsky’s wife Natalia and Albert Goldman, along with “other members of the household I might mention, especially Evelyn Reed.” But Goldman and Natalia were both dead by 1975 and not able to corroborate his story. As for Evelyn Reed, she became the wife of Hansen’s political ally George Novack.

“One purpose of the inquiry [at the consulate] was to do everything possible to suggest that the State Department utilize its resources to help ascertain the real identity of the assassin,” Hansen says.

But the IC never found a single SWP leader from that period who had any knowledge of this meeting. Nor had the SWP been at all interested in obtaining the assistance of the FBI in investigating Trotsky’s murder. “There was no reason,” Felix Morrow would later tell David North. “Jacson [Mercader] had done it.”

Hansen also makes no attempt in this letter to account for the meeting with GPU agent “John.” John’s real identity was Gregory Rabinowitz, the top Stalinist spy in the United States. Hansen would not even try to explain this episode for another year.

But again, the explanation which Hansen gave to McGregor in their meeting at the consulate, that Trotsky had urged him to “go as far with the matter as possible” and that this continued for three months, is absurd. Hansen was at this point 28 years old with barely four years of experience in the Trotskyist movement. It is unimaginable that Trotsky would have so casually exposed a young comrade and one of his personal secretaries to such a terrible danger for the sake of some sort of intelligence fishing expedition, especially at a time when his secretaries were being systematically murdered by the GPU.

This is completely outside of Trotsky's practice, which was not to "infiltrate" the GPU but to expose it publicly. This was the purpose of the Dewey Commission and it occupied a good portion of his activities in the last few years of his life.

Recall also his 1937 letter, "It Is High Time to Launch a World Offensive Against Stalinism," quoted in earlier lectures, where Trotsky says that "the only way" to "purge the ranks of the [revolutionary] movement from the horrible contagion of Stalinism" is by "disclosing to the workers the truth, without exaggerations, but also without any embellishment."

It was also outside of his practice to arrange secret meetings with representatives of the US government, which would be politically damaging and serve no purpose. One instructive example of his approach came in late 1939, when Trotsky was offered to testify before the Dies Committee in Congress, which would later be better known as the House Un-American Activities Committee, on the activities of Stalinism.

He accepted this offer only on condition that this testimony be given in person and publicly. The committee refused this. Trotsky declined to offer written testimony, rebuffing Congress with "If Mr Dies wishes my opinions in written form only, he can read my books."

Hansen fabricates an image of Trotsky in Coyoacan as morose, with no interest in his own safety. He writes that Trotsky found "intolerable" basic security measures such as searching visitors for weapons and not meeting with people alone. According to Hansen, Trotsky considered such measures futile to stop the GPU murder machine.

Hansen, citing one of his earlier articles, claims that after the death of his son Leon Sedov Trotsky was practically on suicide watch. He writes that he quietly removed Trotsky's gun from his desk in the weeks following Sedov's death. "The real security problem in this instance was not counteracting the danger accompanying visitors but helping LD [Trotsky] and Natalia in a personal way through this very difficult period in their lives," he says.

To claim that Trotsky would have considered suicide is not only to insult his memory, it is completely contradicted by his decades-long career as a revolutionary. This is a man who led two revolutions and commanded the Red Army in the civil war. Trotsky was a mass leader who approached even the most terrible events with enormous political objectivity, and with the highest degree of consciousness of his own role in history.

He was also, frankly, not someone unacquainted with death and personal tragedy. Trotsky, while certainly dealt a heavy personal blow, did not fall apart upon hearing the news of his son's death. He responded by demanding that the French police investigate his death in the hospital as a murder.

But more importantly, this was an intensely political question. Trotsky would have understood the catastrophic political implications of such an act for the Fourth International. It would have been interpreted as a confession of failure. For Trotsky, such an act would have been politically impermissible.

This was a question which had a history in the movement. A major political episode for Trotsky's generation had been the suicide of Karl Marx's son-in-law and daughter Paul and Laura Lafargue in 1911, an act that caused considerable controversy in the Second International.

In 1927, Left Oppositionist Adolf Joffe committed suicide in protest of Trotsky's expulsion from the Party. Joffe was in extremely poor health, and the Soviet government had just denied his request to seek treatment abroad.

One observer later recounted Trotsky at Joffe's funeral. His death "deeply affected Trotsky. This kind of death could lead to impermissible imitations by others ... this could not be permitted."

Trotsky concluded his funeral oration with what the author calls "a spirited appeal to life. Trotsky's scorching words seared into the crowd of

10,000 listeners, ringing out like metal. 'No one has the right to follow the example of this death. You must follow the example of this life.'"

The author concludes: "We never forgot this order, this command, even in the darkest days of the Stalinist repression."

This account of Trotsky, from an extremely difficult period only months before his first exile, totally contradicts Hansen's picture of Trotsky as lethargic and potentially suicidal.

But Hansen doubles down. He repeats an earlier anecdote of his in order to create the impression that his own indifference to security flows from Trotsky's attitude:

Whenever the subject [of security] came up, he [Trotsky] was fond of telling the story of [Roman] Malinovsky, who became a member of the Political Bureau of the Bolshevik Party, its representative in the Duma and a trusted confidant of Lenin. Malinovsky was at the same time an agent of the Czar's secret police, the dread Okhrana. He sent hundreds of Bolsheviks into exile and death. Nevertheless, in order to maintain his position of confidence, it was necessary for him to spread the ideas of Bolshevism. These ideas eventually caused his downfall. The proletarian revolution is more powerful than the most cunning police spy.

With this anecdote, Hansen is trying to impute to Trotsky the opinion that security measures are unimportant, because at any rate agents will be dealt with after the revolution. In the meantime, agents not only should be tolerated but can play a positive role in the movement!

He continues in this vein, arguing that this showed that not only was this Trotsky's position, but Lenin's as well.

When suspicion first fell on Malinovsky in 1912, Lenin refused to believe it. In May of 1914, the issue came to a head after Malinovsky suddenly resigned from the Duma and fled the country.

Malinovsky's role was later proven following the February Revolution. In 1917, Lenin explained that he had not believed it before because, "If Malinovsky were a provocateur, the Okhrana would not gain as much from it as our Party did from Pravda and the whole legal apparatus."

Hansen uses this quote to elevate Lenin's initial refusal to investigate to the level of political principle. He virtually implies that Lenin would not have acted differently even if he had conclusive proof of his guilt.

There can be no doubt that Lenin's initial position on Malinovsky was a serious error in judgment. Malinovsky had been implicated by numerous people both inside and outside of the Bolshevik Party, but it was not properly followed up. His position can be understood, although not excused, by the difficulty of communicating in exile and by how the Mensheviks used the suspicions against Malinovsky against the Bolsheviks.

But Lenin's mistake was corrected after Malinovsky was finally exposed. When Malinovsky resurfaced in Petrograd in 1918, he was tried and shot, as Hansen himself acknowledges.

Later, in *Left Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, Lenin wrote of the episode:

In our case, on the other hand, the rapid alternation of legal and illegal work ... sometimes gave rise to extremely dangerous consequences. The *worst of these* [emphasis added] was that in 1912 the agent provocateur Malinovsky got into the Bolshevik Central Committee. He betrayed scores and scores of the best and most loyal comrades, caused them to be sentenced to penal servitude, and hastened the death of many of them.

That he did not cause *still greater harm* [emphasis due to the correct balance between legal and illegal work.]

In other words, Lenin was not saying that Malinovsky's role as a party leader somehow balanced out his role as an agent, but that the party was able to limit the damage that Malinovsky caused.

He concluded with a warning to the movement to learn from this experience:

In many countries, including the most advanced, the bourgeoisie are undoubtedly sending agents provocateurs into the Communist parties and will continue to do so. A skillful combining of illegal and legal work is one of the ways to combat this danger.

The Malinovsky affair proves the opposite of what Hansen claims. Had the lessons been adequately assimilated, Zborowski might never have so easily infiltrated himself into the confidence of Leon Sedov. At the very least, he would have been seriously investigated following the theft of Trotsky's archives. Without Stalin's prized agent in place, the GPU would have had a far harder time ringing Sedov, Trotsky and others with agents and preparing their murders.

What Trotsky was really saying in Hansen's story was that the most basic defense against the GPU is the party's political struggle to expose the criminal role of Stalinism and to break its influence in the working class, and to establish the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution.

Hansen was opposed to this. He consciously miseducated and promoted dangerous illusions among young revolutionaries.

Hansen's misuse of the Malinovsky experience to justify indifference to the work of Stalinist agents is a vulgar form of the Pabloite argument that "unconscious Marxists," a category they claimed included Fidel Castro, spurred on by historical inevitability and in spite of themselves, could act as the agency through which the socialist revolution would be achieved.

This was summed up and distilled in what became the infamous mantra of the SWP that "agents do good work."

In making this argument, the Pabloites were indicating that they were prepared to do business with anyone. Their defense of agents who sought to destroy the Fourth International amounted to a declaration of their hostility to the Fourth International's continued existence.

Hansen's article was supplemented by an article on November 20 by George Novack. It is written in the same vein as Hansen's. He begins by complaining that the "sectarian International Committee" was "totally obsessed" with "this event that happened thirty-five years ago."

In an earlier discussion, David already answered this claim that Trotsky's murder was ancient history. The space of time between Trotsky's murder and 1975 is less than the distance between the start of Security and the Fourth International investigation and today.

Novack ignores every piece of evidence uncovered by the investigation in favor of personal abuse of Healy. Healy is a "shameless liar, unmitigated rascal and a political hooligan," he writes. Attempting an argument on the basis of authority, he claims to be such an "expert on frame-ups of all kinds" that it makes him "as qualified as anyone on either side of the Atlantic to judge the probity of both men [Healy and Hansen]" and "render a verdict," without dealing with a single fact raised in the investigation.

Novack makes two additional points. First, he argues that it was "hardly possible to hold off indefinitely a determined band of assassins, armed with inexhaustible resources," from murdering Trotsky. "With all the forces at their command, the Russian tsars and the Kennedys became

victims of assassins. How could an isolated exile with scant resources and a few friends in a foreign land have been expected to succeed where the entourage of these mighty heads of state had failed?"

Novack says, in other words, that it was impossible to ensure Trotsky's safety. This defeatist attitude is refuted by the facts uncovered by the investigation. In both attempts, assassins had entered Trotsky's villa, which the Mexican chief of police later described as a "fortress house" arrayed with elaborate defenses, with the help of GPU operatives on the inside. Trotsky's murder was the consequence of a series of major security failures, as David Rye reviewed in yesterday's discussion.

While treating Trotsky's murder as a cosmic inevitability, Novack covers for those responsible. He denounces what he calls "reckless and indiscriminate allegations [insinuating] that Trotsky's 19 year old guard Sheldon Harte"—in fact, he was 25!—"Sylvia Caldwell, Cannon's secretary; and Lola Dallin (i.e., Zborowski's self-described 'Siamese twin')" were agents.

Novack defends his work with Lola Dallin to bring Zborowski into the United States in 1941 by claiming that Zborowski's role as an agent was "unknown to them."

This is not true. Not only had suspicions been raised by leading Trotskyists in Europe, but there were also the two letters to Trotsky by Alexander Orlov. Dallin herself, whom Novack praises as a heroic individual, had seen the letter implicating Zborowski during a visit to Coyoacan, and had attempted to throw Trotsky off the scent.

Novack defends those implicated in the assassination, but blames Trotsky and Sedov for their own deaths. He writes:

Healy likewise does not see that Hansen and the others are only secondary figures in the drama. The *principal actors* [emphasis added] were Trotsky and Sedov themselves, who trusted Etienne and allowed Jacson entry into the household. By aiming at the American Trotskyists, Healy strikes at the victims themselves.

In point of fact, it was Hansen and not Trotsky who allowed Mercader into the villa. But more fundamentally, it was the SWP's responsibility to provide for Trotsky's security, not Trotsky's.

Novack's argument amounts to a revival of the old Stalinist theory of "self assault," blaming Trotsky himself for his own murder in order to distract from the actual role played by GPU agents.

The response of the SWP was to systematically bury the findings of Security and the Fourth International. In doing so, it was openly covering for the role of GPU agents in the murder of Trotsky.

On December 23, one month after Hansen's article was published, Harold Robins, the captain of Trotsky's guards, sent a letter to the SWP leadership urging it to "repudiate the inexcusable and politically criminal response by Joseph Hansen." He asked:

Can the forthright rejection of an investigation of the "Assassination of Leon Trotsky" be justified by any Trotskyist organization, especially since the SWP never made any effort to document the recollections of the comrades who served in Trotsky's bodyguard?

This received no reply. The continued silence from the SWP compelled an escalation of the IC's campaign. This came on January 1, 1976, with the publication of a major statement: "The Indictment: Accomplices of the GPU." The defendants in the indictment were Joseph Hansen and George Novack.

The use of the term “accomplices” is significant here. The IC was not accusing Hansen and Novack of themselves being agents. But those who cover up the activities of the GPU, as they were doing, are themselves accomplices after the fact.

The statement begins:

We accuse Joseph Hansen and leaders of the Socialist Workers Party (USA) of deliberately covering up GPU murder and penetration of the Trotskyist movement for the purposes of spying and disruption. This cover-up, conducted over 35 years, has directly aided the GPU.

“This is not the first time that questions surrounding the assassination of Trotsky have been blocked,” the statement continues. “When Henricus Sneevliet, secretary of the Workers Revolutionary Socialist Party in Holland, and Georges Vereeken of the Belgian Trotskyist movement first raised questions about Zborowski’s guilt in the late 1930s, they were framed by GPU slanders.”

Vereecken’s campaign for an investigation into Zborowski during the latter’s trial in 1956 was suppressed, and in 1964 Vereeken “was slandered as a ‘sectarian’ when he wanted to read out a document implicating Zborowski and rehabilitating himself and Sneevliet.”

The indictment consisted of eight counts. They were as follows:

- That for 37 years Joseph Hansen has suppressed from the Trotskyist movement details of his personal contacts with a GPU agent known as “John” [Gregory Rabinowitz] in New York in 1938.

- Joseph Hansen and George Novack have deliberately created diversions and slander campaigns to prevent a full-scale inquiry into the security at Coyoacan where Trotsky was murdered on August 20, 1940.

- Joseph Hansen and George Novack have protected and covered up for Sylvia Franklin, the GPU agent in the Socialist Workers Party who became personal secretary to the late James P. Cannon throughout the 1940s.

- Joseph Hansen has contrived to prevent an inquiry into the role of Robert Sheldon Harte, the guard sent by the SWP’s New York headquarters to Trotsky’s household in April 1940.

- Joseph Hansen has suppressed the fact that in 1941 it was the Socialist Workers Party who helped bring Stalin’s No. 1 anti-Trotskyist agent, Mark Zborowski, into the United States from France.

- We accuse George Novack and Mrs. David Dallin (Lola Estrine) of admitting the GPU spy Mark Zborowski into the United States and re-integrating him into the top levels of the Fourth International although he was gravely suspect, and then suppressing this fact for 35 years.

- Joseph Hansen has deliberately covered up the GPU spy career of Floyd Cleveland Miller, the US Stalinist who tapped James P. Cannon’s home telephone for a year before joining the SWP to become a leading figure in organizing Trotskyist seamen.

- George Novack accuses Leon Trotsky and his son Leon Sedov of responsibility for their own deaths.

“This is the most monstrous lie of all,” the indictment reads, “a lie which Novack has taken directly from the GPU.”

“Why does Novack blame Trotsky and Sedov for their own deaths?” it concludes. “Trotsky gave the answer to this question in 1940 when the GPU employed the slander initially: ‘It was necessary at the same time to distract, so far as possible, attention away from the GPU, without however tying one’s own hands completely.’”

The indictment concludes:

On three separate occasions during 1975 the International

Committee of the Fourth International demanded that Hansen give answers to questions relating to revolutionary security of the Fourth International. His reply was an outright refusal ... accompanied by an unparalleled campaign of lies and slander.

By refusing to answer, Hansen aids and abets those who killed Trotsky, his children, his secretaries, the Old Bolsheviks and countless revolutionists—the GPU ... every attempt over many years to establish the truth of the GPU murder and penetration into the Fourth International has been blocked.

A clear method emerges. Touch the question of revolutionary security in the Fourth International and you immediately fall victim to a campaign of the ugliest slander, gossip and lies. It is the language of the GPU and its accomplices Hansen and Novack.

The International Committee of the Fourth International will not be intimidated by Hansen’s slanders. It is bigger than Hansen’s and the GPU’s lie machine since it represents the historic continuity of Trotsky’s struggle to build the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution.

The GPU and its accomplices like Hansen cannot suppress the truth any longer.



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