The Security and the Fourth International investigation deepens

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This is the first part of the lecture "The Security and the Fourth International investigation deepens," delivered by Evan Blake and Josh Andrews 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 three supplementary texts reviewed in the lecture: "The Indictment Stands," "Sylvia Franklin Dossier," and "Will the Real Joseph Hansen Please Stand Up." These documents were milestones in the development of the Security investigation and are essential reading for the education of Trotskyist cadre today.

The relentless fight for Security and the Fourth International

The publication of "The Indictment" of Joseph Hansen and George Novack on New Year's Day 1976 opened the next stage of the Security and the Fourth International investigation. This period was characterized by a relentless pursuit of the truth by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), which was met with the ever-growing unity of the Pabloites and other revisionists internationally in defense of Hansen and the SWP.

For 35 years, the narrative on Trotsky's assassination and the GPU penetration of the Fourth International had remained unchallenged, notwithstanding the evidence that had emerged about Franklin, Zborowski and others. From the moment suspicions were first raised in 1947 that Sylvia Caldwell was a GPU agent, key facts were never written about or acknowledged by the SWP, and a deepening cover-up unfolded. The publication of the initial findings of the Security and the Fourth International investigation in 1975, soon compiled in the book *How the GPU Murdered Leon Trotsky*, finally brought to an end this long period of concealment. For the first time, the real history of Stalinist infiltration and the murder machine which killed Leon Trotsky, his son, and other founders of the Fourth International was made available to the general public and to Trotskyists throughout the world.

In this context, the response of the SWP, the Pabloites and all revisionist tendencies to the publication of *How the GPU Murdered Leon Trotsky* was staggering. With the exception of the Belgian Pabloite Georges Vereeken, no one in the entire milieu of Pabloite politics raised any concerns about these comprehensive initial findings of the Security investigation. Instead, they all accepted at face value the cynical, lying defense of Hansen and Novack. Beginning in late 1975 and continuing through 1976, Pabloites and revisionists throughout the world published glowing endorsements of Hansen and Novack, while accusing the ICFI and Gerry Healy of "ravings," "mental degenerations," "calumnies," "filth," "utter moral and political degeneration" and more.

The ICFI responded to each attack within days, thoroughly rebutting the slanders and falsifications of the revisionists. The following are the revisionists' key statements, which were compiled in December 1976 into an SWP pamphlet titled *Healy's Big Lie*, along with the response of the ICFI to each attack.

• The first to rush to print were the Workers Socialist League (WSL) headed by Alan Thornett, which published a December 31, 1975 statement in *Socialist Press* titled, "WRP FRAMES HANSEN." The SWP's *Intercontinental Press* reprinted the WSL statement in their January 19, 1976, edition. David North replied to this in a *Bulletin* article published February 10, 1976, titled, "WE CHALLENGE THE WSL (Thornett Group)."

• On January 29, 1976, *Red Weekly*, the publication of the International Marxist Group (IMG), published a statement titled, "The Healy Road to the Gutter." Comrade North responded just one week later in the article, "WE CHALLENGE THE IMG" published in the February 6, 1976 edition of the *Bulletin.*

• On Feburary 13, 1976, the one-month anniversary of the *Bulletin*'s initial publication of "The Indictment: Accomplices of the GPU," the *Bulletin* ran the first publication of "QUESTIONS STILL UNANSWERED," which reiterated the core charges of "The Indictment" and posed further questions to Hansen and Novack, while reissuing the call for a Commission of Inquiry. This would be the first of eight republications of the Indictment over the next two months. On the same page, an advertisement was placed for a public meeting to be held Saturday, February 28, featuring the speakers Harold Robins, David North and *Bulletin* editor Jeff Sebastian.

• The February 24, 1976, issue of the *Bulletin* included a Workers League Political Committee Statement titled, "WE CHALLENGE PETER CAMEJO." The statement exposed the statements of Camejo, then the SWP's presidential candidate, at a February 13 campaign meeting, in which he explicitly said that Hansen and Novack had no responsibility for bringing Zborowski to the US and that the ICFI was engaged in a slander campaign against the SWP.

• On March 2, 1976, the *Bulletin* reported on the February 28 meeting at New York University, which was highly successful, with 350 workers, students and youth in attendance. A resolution was unanimously passed supporting the establishment of a commission of inquiry.

• Outside that meeting 50 members of the revisionist group Spartacist, headed by James Robertson, set up a picket to try to prevent the meeting from taking place, distributing a statement in defense of Hansen and Novack. They repeated this provocation outside similar meetings on the West Coast on the same topic. On March 16, 1976, the *Bulletin* published "WE CHALLENGE SPARTACIST," which took apart the lies of the Spartacist pamphlet.

• The February 27-March 4, 1976 edition of *Informations Ouvrieres*, publication of the OCI, published an article by Betty Hamilton and Pierre Lambert attacking the Security investigation. On March 26, 1976, the *Bulletin* responded to Hamilton and Lambert in the article,"OCI

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REVISIONISTS AID THE ACCOMPLICES OF THE GPU."

• On March 30, 1976, the *Bulletin* began publishing "THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL AND THE RENEGADE WOHLFORTH," which was the subject of a lecture at the 2023 school. It is a devastating polemic against Wohlforth, which includes a review and critique of his drastic reversal of positions towards Hansen and the SWP after he left the Workers League.

• On April 6, 1976, the *Bulletin* published "WE CHALLENGE THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY," which marked three months since the publication of "The Indictment" and summarized the developments noted above.

• On May 17, 1976, *Intercontinental Press* published an article by Ernest Tate, titled, "When Isaac Deutscher Showed Healy the Door." On May 21, 1976, just four days later, the *Bulletin* published a response by David North titled, "ERNEST TATE IS A LIAR."

• On June 11, 1976, the *Bulletin* began the serialized publication of an ICFI statement, "THE INDICTMENT THAT REMAINS UNANSWERED." It contains a comprehensive review of the revisionist slanders published up until that point. This included some statements that had not been commented on previously or publicly released by the SWP, including from revisionists supposedly hostile to the SWP such as Alain Krivine, Pierre Frank, Tariq Ali, Ernest Mandel, Michel Pablo, Sam Gordon, John and Mary Archer, and more. Even an entirely new organization, the so-called League for Socialist Action, had sprung up in London after a visit to the city by Hansen and immediately published a statement in his defense, never to be heard from again.

• On July 14, 1976, the *Bulletin* published the ICFI Statement, "ANSWER THE INDICTMENT." This coincided with the publication of the broadside magazine-format edition of *How the GPU Murdered Trotsky*, which was beautifully designed by the artist and graphic designer David King.

• The July 17, 1976 edition of the *Bulletin* contained the ICFI statement, "STOP COVERUP OF THE FACTS ABOUT TROTSKY'S MURDER."

• On July 27, 1976, the *Bulletin* published a full-page ad for an upcoming "Meeting to commemorate the 36th anniversary of Trotsky's death."

• Finally, on August 4, 1976, the *Bulletin* published a Workers League Political Committee statement titled, "An Open Letter to the Members of the Socialist Workers Party," which summarized the Security investigation and called on rank-and-file SWP members to take up this topic inside their party.

Reviewing these publications in the *Bulletin* archives, one gets a sense of the dogged determination of comrades of this generation—most of whom were recruited in the late 1960s and early '70s—who refused to let these vital questions for the Trotskyist movement go unanswered.

At the same time, these comrades were highly active in the working class, covering all the major strikes and contract struggles, deepening our fight to free Gary Tyler, while continuously analyzing the political and economic situation, reviewing films and scientific developments, publishing exposures of unsafe working conditions, and issuing historical and theoretical publications.

Throughout 1976, while all of the above statements on Security and the Fourth International were being published, the Workers League was also engaged in our first intensive national election campaign, running 14 candidates in congressional districts across the US. This campaign in the working class found a powerful response, which included nearly 5,000 votes for autoworker John Austin in Dayton, Ohio.

What comes across very powerfully in reviewing these *Bulletin* archives is that the Workers League was the only genuine Trotskyist tendency in the US, fighting with our comrades internationally to build the ICFI and a revolutionary socialist movement in the American and international working class. The fight for Security and historical truth was an essential component of this struggle.

Hansen's second response: "Healy Caught in the Logic of the Big Lie"

For a full seven months after the publication of "The Indictment," Hansen and Novack wrote nothing publicly in response. They did not vigorously defend themselves or present any documents or testimony to refute the charges of the ICFI that for over 35 years they had functioned as accomplices of the GPU. Their actions stood in diametric opposition to those of Leon Trotsky, who fully disclosed all of his writings and correspondence and provided exhaustive testimony to the Dewey Commission.

Hansen's deafening silence was finally broken on August 9, 1976, when *Intercontinental Press* published a 23-page article titled, "Healy Caught in the Logic of the Big Lie." This was the longest document Hansen ever wrote in response to Security and the Fourth International. But far from refuting any of the charges made by the ICFI or explaining his actions, Hansen's document verified these charges and provided fresh evidence of a vast cover-up for the GPU.

Hansen begins the document with a total dismissal of the significance of the Security investigation's findings, while once again maligning Healy as "a candidate for psychiatric examination." He then repeats his diversion from the first article, arguing speciously that the charges against him should also apply to James P. Cannon and Leon Trotsky, and therefore amount to nothing.

Hansen then defends his co-accomplice George Novack, downplaying the significance of Novack's own admission in that article that he had worked with Lola Dallin to bring Zborowski to the United States. Hansen writes simply that "The agent, Zborowski, was later exposed," ignoring Dallin's years of covering up for Zborowski by that point, and the direct role of Hansen and Novack in suppressing this exposure within the Trotskyist movement.

The next section of his document is titled, "Why is Healy Silent About His Connections with Zborowski?" Here Hansen compounds his decades-long suppression of the truth around Zborowski, significantly distorting correspondence he had with Healy in March 1960 regarding Zborowski, a.k.a. "Etienne." Hansen's presentation of this correspondence is a total inversion of reality, filled with lies and cynical innuendo, in which he portrays Healy as having met with Zborowski and then deliberately covering up these meetings.

In March 1960, Healy was given an advance review copy of Isaac Don Levine's book *The Mind of an Assassin*, which dealt with Ramon Mercader's background and the network of GPU agents involved in Trotsky's murder, including Zborowski-Etienne. After World War II, another French Trotskyist named Etienne—who had been in Europe throughout the war—spent time in London. Healy was concerned that this might have been the same man, not knowing at the time that Zborowski-Etienne had been brought to the US in 1941 through the efforts of Novack and Dallin. On March 14, 1960, Healy wrote to Hansen about these concerns and fully revealed his own meetings with the French Etienne.

Healy's letter seeking clarification was entirely principled, and urged Hansen and the SWP to pursue this matter thoroughly, stressing:

> We are duty bound to check on this allegation immediately because all sorts of possibilities emerge… I think, Joe, we need a full discussion on the whole matter and I will be glad of your observations.

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> Is Levine right on the question of Etienne? If he is, then it is necessary for us in the not-too-distant future to have a very real examination of the whole international ramifications of the Trotskyist movement.

On March 19, 1960, Hansen replied to Healy with an extraordinary letter that deliberately sowed confusion in order to shield both Zborowski and Sylvia Caldwell. Knowing full well that the Etienne referred to by Levine had been brought to the US and that Healy had met a different Etienne, Hansen did not clarify Healy on this vital question.

Hansen claimed that the SWP did not attend Zborowski's 1956 hearings in New York "because of our personnel problems," when in fact the hearings were just a few miles from SWP headquarters.

Furthermore, Hansen noted that in his own review of Levine's book "we decided not to give much space to the Etienne case." Hansen claimed that he omitted this because Levine wanted to "picture the Trotskyist movement as crawling with spies," and to try to refute this would have required that Hansen deal with the "report about Cannon's personal secretary being a GPU agent." Hansen's writings here once again confirm that there was a deliberate decision made in the SWP leadership, under the influence of Hansen and Novack, not to cover Zborowski's hearings and to cover up the evidence that Sylvia Franklin was a GPU agent.

Hansen also repeated his favorite argument against security vigilance and for allowing agents to run amok in the SWP, writing:

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

The next lecture will address in detail that just as Hansen wrote these lines in 1960, the FBI was deepening its penetration of the SWP and flooding the organization with hundreds of agents, with the core leadership drawn from the conservative Carleton College in Minnesota.

After receiving Hansen's letter, Healy went to the American Library in London and found Zborowski's 1956 testimony to the US Senate Judiciary Committee, verifying that this was not the French Etienne whom he had met.

He wrote back to Hansen on March 28, 1960, requesting a photograph of Etienne-Zborowski, while stressing: "The whole thing, however, has to be the subject of a most thoroughgoing investigation."

Hansen never sent the photograph and never followed Healy's instructions. However, his correspondence with Healy soon ended up in the hands of the FBI, either through a direct handoff from Hansen or as part of their routine "black bag" nighttime sweeps of the SWP headquarters.

Returning to Hansen's August 1976 article, when he refers to this March 1960 correspondence with Healy, Hansen quotes only one paragraph from Healy's initial letter, using this to frame Healy as deliberately concealing his relations with Etienne, whom Hansen never states was not Zborowski. He omits his own response to Healy, as it is filled with the damning quotes just reviewed, and conceals Healy's repeated attempts to initiate a thoroughgoing investigation of the history of GPU penetration in the Trotskyist movement.

The next sections of Hansen's document contain numerous subjective slanders of Harold Robins, which are also filled with various distortions. He then calls into question the account of Isaac Deutscher (deceased since 1967), who noted in *The Prophet Outcast* that Trotsky had told Hansen he was suspicious of Ramon Mercader, writing, "it was on the day before the attempt on his life that Trotsky confided his vague suspicions to Hansen."

In a very slippery and long-winded manner, Hansen casts doubt on the veracity of this claim while never explicitly denying it, saying, "I told Deutscher I could not recall Trotsky telling me he had developed suspicions about Jacson."

In another extensive section which we do not have time to review in detail, Hansen again denies the legitimacy of the 1956 sworn testimony of GPU agent Thomas L. Black before a sub-committee of the US Senate Judiciary Committee, in which Black testified that GPU ringleader Gregory Rabinowitz had told him to go to Coyoacan where "there would be other Soviet agents in Trotsky's household."

Hansen's repeated questioning of the validity of ex-GPU agents' testimony stands in direct opposition to the position of Trotsky, who in his last article before his assassination argued for the validity of such testimony from the ex-Stalinist Benjamin Gitlow. Hansen's repeated attempts to discredit the Black testimony are a transparent effort to provide himself with a cover, as he was clearly one of the GPU agents to whom Rabinowitz was referring.

The final sections of Hansen's article are the most damning, as he openly admits to Charge One of the indictment, acknowledging that he met with the GPU agent "John" (a.k.a. Gregory Rabinowitz, the chief architect of Trotsky's assassination in the US) in the late 1930s. As reviewed in the last lecture, these meetings with the GPU had been hidden from the Trotskyist movement for over 35 years, until finally revealed through the publication of Robert McGregor's memo on his August 31, 1940 meeting with Hansen at the US Consulate in Mexico City. Again, McGregor reported that:

> 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 identity.

In his first reply to the initial findings of Security and the Fourth International, Hansen proclaimed that the revelations contained in the McGregor memo were "a geyser of mud." He entirely side-stepped the issue of his meetings with the GPU agent "John," a.k.a. Rabinowitz. Nearly a full year after the ICFI first published this document, Hansen decided to finally address this by fabricating an unbelievable story involving a supposed mission assigned to him by Trotsky, Cannon and Shachtman, to "milk" the GPU.

After first claiming that the meetings actually took place in 1939, not 1938, Hansen begins his fairy tale by quoting at length what he claims is "A Hitherto Unpublished Letter by Trotsky." But the majority of this letter, which deals with Trotsky's critical approach towards the SWP's work in the Communist Party, had actually been published in 1974. Hansen totally distorts the meaning of this letter, in which Trotsky clearly advocates for an orientation towards recruiting rank-and-file Stalinist workers, to make the absurd claim that Trotsky condoned meetings with the GPU, including by top SWP leaders.

Hansen publishes additional paragraphs from Trotsky's letter, which in no way condone such meetings with GPU agents. But there is a reference to "the manuscript," which Hansen claims is a coded reference to the "GPU." The manuscript is referring to Trotsky's biography of Stalin, which was incomplete at the time of his assassination.

Having set this stage, Hansen then brings in Cannon, Shachtman and

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Trotsky as his chief witnesses. Conveniently for Hansen, all three were now deceased. According to Hansen, at a March 20, 1939 discussion, the three men encouraged Hansen to "take on a GPU agent from whom something might be milked."

After everything that we've reviewed over the course of this school, the outrageous and patently false character of this story is self-evident.

To provide himself with a trusted cover, Hansen then claims that only his fellow guard Vaughn T. O'Brien was also aware of this scheme. O'Brien, a childhood friend of Hansen's, would emerge as the only living witness to this fantastic tale. He notes that "in communicating to O'Brien on this topic, I was to use invisible ink, writing between double-spaced typewritten lines of letters on other subjects."

Hansen obviously instructed O'Brien to write him a letter in 1976 to corroborate his story, which O'Brien sent on June 8, 1976. In this letter, which Hansen cites in his article, O'Brien states:

> A couple of weeks after your departure, I received a long letter from you, full of news from New York and of our friends there and around the country. I read it gratefully but never thought to give it the heat test.

According to O'Brien, after uncovering the hidden message, "I relayed L.D.'s advice to continue the contact."

While O'Brien's letter was intended to bolster Hansen's alibi, it only expanded the web of contradictions and lies which he was spinning. Parts of this letter were left unpublished by Hansen because they cut across his narrative. The full letter was only revealed through the Gelfand Case, which we'll return to later, but the passages cited are entirely unbelievable.

Hansen then claims that Trotsky requested a memorandum on his contacts with the GPU, which Max Shachtman drew up "in the form of a report to the Political Committee."

Absurdly, however, Hansen claims that "It was actually made known to only some of the members at the time, those with an incorrigible inclination to gossip about matters taken up in the Political Committee being bypassed."

Neither Hansen nor O'Brien were even on the SWP Political Committee at the time, yet somehow Trotsky entrusted them with this most sensitive mission. Every member of the SWP Political Committee in 1939 who was still alive and contacted by the ICFI during the Security investigation denied ever knowing anything about this memorandum or Hansen's contacts with the GPU.

On its face, the memorandum is clearly a forgery, as no Trotskyist would write or sign such a statement. Dated April 7, 1939, it states:

> To the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party
> Comrades:
>
> Upon his return to the United States from Mexico, Comrade Joe Hansen chanced to meet an agent of the G.P.U. This agent introduced Hansen to a superior in the G.P.U., a man apparently the head or one of the heads of the American division of the G.P.U. This man whose real name Hansen does not know but who may be called "Y" sounded out the possibilities of converting Hansen into an agent of the G.P.U. Hansen immediately informed Comrades Trotsky, Cannon, and Shachtman. Under their direction and with their full approval he conducted for purposes of reconnaissance in the American G.P.U. organization a series of conversations with "Y" upon the Stalin book which Comrade Trotsky is now writing, the internal status of the S.W. P., and the internal conditions in Mexico, in all cases giving equivocal, misleading answers to "Y's" questions or telling him things that are semi-public knowledge, reporting in detail after each meeting to Comrades Trotsky, Cannon, and Shachtman. Through these conversations valuable information has been gained for the Fourth International.
>
> Hansen is disinclined—for fear that the story might leak out and because the reconnaissance is not yet completed—that the entire P.C. should be made aware of this affair at present without full guarantees that his personal safety and the further political gains which might accrue be safe-guarded by complete silence on the part of P.C. members with their friends, political associates, and correspondents regarding this affair.
>
> Even the most guarded allusions or hints might cause the failure of further work in this regard.
>
> J.P. Cannon
> Max Shachtman
> Joe Hansen

Every aspect of this alibi was shot through with contradictions and was patently absurd.

First, one does not "chance to meet" GPU agents, who are highly trained killers that are particularly cautious in their initial contacts. Furthermore, they do not introduce Trotskyists to their controllers, as this would jeopardize their cover.

Even supposing that this "chance" encounter took place, the chronology presented by Hansen makes no sense. How would he, O'Brien and Trotsky have arranged their secret code after the "chance" contact with the GPU took place?

Finally, the memorandum refers to "valuable information" supposedly obtained from the GPU. What information was obtained? Why was it never published or reported on?

In the end, Hansen's entire second document amounted to a doubling down on the line of his first response. Once again, he cynically evaded any serious examination of the unique revelations made by the Security investigation. Rather, he wriggled and adjusted in response to the offensive of the ICFI, leaving everything vague and confused, while never providing his own positive exposition of his story.

The "Verdict" and the "Platform of Shame": The Pabloites rally in defense of Hansen, Novack, Sylvia Franklin and Sheldon Harte

Hansen's second document was published exactly one week before the ICFI held a series of meetings to commemorate the 36th anniversary of Trotsky's assassination. The most significant of these took place on August 15 at the Hammersmith Palais in West London, drawing 3,000 workers and youth. This mass audience demonstrated the real balance of forces at the time and the growing interest in uncovering the truth behind Trotsky's assassination. After speeches by Harold Robins, Georges Vereeken, and Mike Banda, Gerry Healy took the floor and directly responded to Hansen's lying document published the week prior.

Healy concluded the event by stating:

> All the facts reveal that the BIG LIE specialist is Hansen. He claims that Healy is the liar. Then let him prove it by agreeing to organize a commission sponsored and mutually agreed to by the SWP, the "United Secretariat," the International Committee, and

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the Workers Revolutionary Party which will examine all the evidence.

As one of the leading members of the Workers Revolutionary Party I am willing to appear before that commission to be questioned and cross-examined publicly about the charges contained in the Indictment of the International Committee of the Fourth International, provided Hansen and Novack are willing to do the same. We await their answer!

The packed audience voted to support the formation of an international committee of inquiry into all the aspects of the GPU murder of Trotsky. The following day, the WRP held a press conference, with Robins, Vereeken and Alex Mitchell, to announce a campaign to set up this international committee of inquiry. In attendance were reporters from *The Times*, *The Guardian*, the *Daily Telegraph*, Press Association, the *New Statesman* and the London *Evening Standard*. One week later, the Workers League held a public meeting in New York City addressed by Comrades North and Mazelis, as well as Harold Robins, which drew over 100 attendees.

In response to this deepening global offensive for historical truth by the ICFI, on September 6 *Intercontinental Press* published a document which will go down in history as among the most unprincipled statements ever written and endorsed by the revisionist tendencies, titled, "The Verdict: 'A Shameless Frame-up.'"

The statement, signed by a motley crew of 168 revisionists, liberals, and even open anti-communists and anti-Trotskyists, portrayed Hansen and Novack as the "victims" of a "shameless frame-up" and a "slander campaign" orchestrated by the WRP and Gerry Healy. With total cynicism and contempt for the truth, the statement ignores the immense public record established by the Security investigation, declaring:

> Healy and his associates have not brought forward the slightest probative evidence, documents, or testimony to substantiate their libelous accusations against Hansen and Novack, the nominal targets of the attacks. The script of their polemics is fabricated out of baseless innuendoes, gratuitous suppositions and outright lies that do not have any political content or foundation in fact. They constitute a shameless frame-up.

In a total distortion of the record, and ignoring the rebuttals of the ICFI to the revisionists' attacks on Security, they add:

> The specific allegations have been exposed and refuted point by point in articles by various organizations and individuals printed in *Intercontinental Press* which can be consulted for extensive information.

The statement concludes by inverting reality and accusing the ICFI of conducting a "smear campaign" akin to Stalin's slanderous claims that Trotsky was an agent of the Gestapo. In reality, it was Hansen, Novack, the SWP and their revisionist allies who were objectively covering up the role of the GPU and FBI in penetrating the Trotskyist movement.

The ICFI responded immediately to "The Verdict" with a statement written the following day by the Workers League Political Committee, titled, "Hansen Fabricates a 'Verdict.'" On October 1, 1976, the ICFI issued a more comprehensive response to both Hansen's second document and "The Verdict" in a statement titled "The Indictment Stands." This is one of the foundational documents of the Security investigation which must be studied by all comrades. In the introduction, the statement notes that Hansen's "verdict" is

> like the Queen in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, who arrived at the sentence before the verdict. Hansen and Novack have gone one better: they have arrived at their own self-styled verdict even before the trial.
>
> That is, they have assumed the role of judge and jury to acquit themselves of all the charges brought by the International Committee. At the same time, they fiercely oppose an international commission of inquiry along the lines of the Dewey Commission of 1937 which the International Committee has proposed.

The bulk of the document reviews the eight charges of the initial indictment, refuting each claim advanced by Hansen in his August 9 article and bringing forward new evidence. The concluding section, titled, "Who backs the accomplices of the GPU?", is a devastating exposure of the key signatories to "The Verdict." It divides them into five main categories:

> 1. Those who have been party to the coverup, who know that the evidence against Hansen and Novack is irrefutable and who know that the charges are proven. This is the group that most of all fears a commission of inquiry to expose the GPU and its accomplices. They are the men who live with lies every day.

Among these were included Michel Pablo, Ernest Mandel, Pierre Frank, Sam Gordon, Morris Stein and Albert Glotzer.

> 2. Those merchants of slander who comprise a veritable International Renegades Incorporated. They would sign anything directed against the International Committee.

Among these were Tim Wohlforth, Nancy Fields, Pierre Lambert, Betty Hamilton, Robin Blick, Mark Jenkins, Kate Blakeney, James Robertson, John Tully and John and Mary Archer.

> 3. The friends of the Kremlin and "progressive mankind," who masquerade as Trotskyists whenever it suits them in order to better crawl on their bellies before the Stalinists. It is within these sick circles that East meets West, that is, where the agencies of both imperialism and Stalinism are afforded a fertile field for reconnaissance operations against the revolutionary movement.

In this milieu were Ken Coates of the Bertrand Russell "Peace" Foundation; the apologists for Stalinism of the IMG, Robin Blackburn, Tariq Ali, and Pat Jordan; and the dubious Ralph Schoenman.

> 4. This is the largest group of all, encompassing not only Hansen's international entourage of yes-men, opportunists and adventurers, but also middle-class freelancers, renegades and out-and-out anti-communists. There is not to be found among them

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> even the shadow of a serious revolutionary element…. In gathering their signatures, Hansen and Novack in essence pose the question: "Everyone against exposing the GPU, hands up!"

In this group were Jack Barnes, Peter Camejo, and the entire leadership of the SWP; Nahuel Moreno of Argentina, Luis Vitale of Chile, Peng Shutse of China, Alain Krivine of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire in France; the associate of Robert McNamara in Sri Lanka, Bala Tampoe; the ex-Trotskyists C.L.R. James and Raya Dunayevskaya; and numerous other lesser-known figures internationally.

> 5. This last group—which consists of associates, sympathizers, and the grandson of Trotsky—must decide whether they will stand for the exposure of Trotsky's murderers or with those who cover up for them.
>
> Those individuals who belong to this group have signed the "verdict" for reasons best known to themselves. They could have first consulted the International Committee and studied its evidence but they did not. They are being used or—and we will not exclude this possibility—are deliberately offering to be used by Hansen and Novack.

Among these were Tamara Deutscher, Marguerite Bonner, Daniel Guerin, Trotsky's grandson Vsevolod Volkov, and Jean van Heijenoort, the latter of whom did not sign the "verdict" but effectively endorsed it in an accompanying interview. The ICFI statement notes that van Heijenoort directly contradicts statements that he made in an interview with the ICFI on September 10, 1975.

The statement concludes forcefully:

> There is one thing of which all can be assured: the International Committee cannot be deterred from its investigation by the "reputation" and "prestige" of anyone. Comrade Trotsky, the Fourth International which he founded, and the historical questions raised in his death, tower above the petty affairs of this or that individual.
>
> The inner political thread which binds all the political reprobates who have signed the "verdict" is their hatred of Trotskyism and their mortal fear of the world revolution. They have the impudence to write that they oppose the International Committee's investigation because: "We are concerned about the practice of such disruptive methods in the workers movement." Their capacity for self-righteousness is matched only by hypocrisy.

In December 1976, the SWP published a special bulletin titled, "Healy's Big Lie" which compiled the two articles by Hansen, Novack's November 1975 defense of Hansen, the "Verdict," and the various revisionists' statements of support for Hansen and Novack, with an introduction written by Tim Wohlforth. Going forward, "Healy's Big Lie" would be treated as gospel by the revisionists, pledging their faith in Hansen and vitriolic hostility to the ICFI and the Security investigation.

After the publication of "The Verdict," the SWP and the revisionists announced that they would be holding a meeting in London the following January, where the charges against Hansen and Novack would supposedly be answered. While they were busy promoting the meeting, the ICFI issued powerful statements exposing the fraudulent character of the event, including a January 4, 1977, open letter from Mike Banda and a critical statement by David North titled, "Wohlforth—On to the Platform of Shame."

On January 14, 1977, the infamous Platform of Shame took place in London, drawing together many of the revisionists who signed "The Verdict." The speakers included the renegades from Trotskyism Tim Wohlforth, Ernest Mandel, Tariq Ali, Pierre Lambert, and one of the accused accomplices of the GPU, George Novack. Conspicuously absent from the platform was the chief accused, Joseph Hansen. For reasons known only to himself, but in all likelihood due to the same fear of Healy later voiced by Tim Wohlforth, Hansen chose to stay in the US and not publicly defend himself at the meeting.

The meeting was called under the fraudulent banner of "workers' democracy and against frame-ups and slander." As the *News Line* wrote at the time, "There was no democracy but plenty of slander." As David North noted in opening this summer school, the platform of revisionists hurled insults at Healy, the WRP and the ICFI for two hours. When Healy arose to speak, which many in the audience supported, Ali refused to allow him one minute and abruptly shut down the meeting.

Comrade North powerfully summarized the significance of this meeting in his opening report, and I would just add the testimony of one other witness to the events. While the revisionists celebrated that they had prevented Healy from speaking, the reporter for the *Sunday Observer* noted, "Mr Healy quietly sat down again, feeling perhaps that he had made his point more eloquently than any words could have done."

The search for Sylvia Franklin

The Platform of Shame was the first in a series of critical milestones in the Security investigation which took place in 1977, one of the most concentrated years of revelations and developments.

Coinciding with the Platform of Shame, in early January the ICFI began serial publication of "Assassin at Large," an extensive series into the background and life of Trotsky's killer Ramon Mercader. For the first time, the series revealed publicly that Mercader was still alive and continuing his work for the Stalinist secret police and the exiled Spanish Communist Party in the Soviet Union.

Unfortunately we do not have time to go into this series in detail now, but it was a critical pamphlet based on a trip to Mexico City by an International Committee delegation, including Comrade North, in December 1976.

It includes interviews with Mercader's lawyer Eduardo Ceniceros, Professor of Criminology Dr. Alfonso Quiroz Cuaron, Spanish POUM leader Julian Gorkin, and Mexican journalist Eduardo Tellez Vargas, all of whom shed new light on different aspects of Trotsky's assassination. The pamphlet also provided new information on Robert Sheldon Harte which further indicated that he was a GPU agent.

On March 6, over 3,000 workers and youth took part in the ICFI's "Festival of Trotskyism" held at the Wembley Conference Center in London. The eight-hour festival included the screening of a film on Trotsky's life and assassination, a session on the Security investigation, an exhibition of over 300 photos and documents illustrating the history of the Marxist movement and Russian Revolution, and speeches by ICFI representatives internationally.

Two days later, Comrade North and Georges Vereeken traveled to Paris to intervene at a public meeting held by the Pabloites on March 8. When North reviewed the key facts of the Security investigation and directly posed to panelists Michel Pablo and Jean van Heijenoort whether Sylvia Franklin was an agent, they both admitted that she was.

Contradicting his pro-Hansen interview just a few months prior, Van

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Heijenoort stated, “everything in my mind at the present time goes in the direction that Sylvia was an agent of the GPU.”

Asked whether he agreed with Van Heijenoort, Pablo also directly contradicted his signing of “The Verdict,” stating, “Oh, I think so. Definitely. I think she was, yes, an agent. I think so. And I think it is right that they must admit it. That’s my position. The Socialist Workers Party must admit it.”

On March 18, David North wrote an “Open Letter to Jack Barnes from the Workers League,” which explained the significance of these public statements by Pablo and van Heijenoort. This was part of a series of articles following up from the Platform of Shame. On March 22, the WRP openly challenged the IMG to a debate, which the IMG declined on April 7. On May 24, 1977, the *Bulletin* published an exchange of three letters between Cliff Slaughter and Ernest Mandel, in which Slaughter reiterated the demand for a Commission of Inquiry, which Mandel studiously avoided in his response. Slaughter then replied with a powerful summation of the investigation up to that point, and this letter is one of many examples of his and Banda’s strong support for the Security investigation throughout these initial years.

In May 1977, two years after the initiation of the Security and the Fourth International investigation, Comrade North and Alex Mitchell were able to locate and interview Sylvia Franklin. Thirty years after she was exposed as a GPU agent in 1947, prompting her to abruptly leave both the SWP and New York City, Franklin was now living a comfortable life of middle-class obscurity in Wheaton, Illinois, remarried to James Doxsee. This was the first time the Trotskyist movement had confronted Franklin and questioned her since the bogus 1947 Control Commission which cleared her name without any serious examination of her background or the evidence against her.

The *Bulletin* report, published May 31, 1977, notes that over the course of the interview, Franklin feigned a “spectacular case of amnesia, decorated with throbbing headaches, blackouts, fainting spells and all the requisite hysterics.” This performance would only be bested in her deposition hearing in the Gelfand case, when she feigned amnesia 231 times.

Everything in this interview fully corroborated the charges of the ICFI that Franklin was a GPU agent, shattering the myth of Hansen that she was an “exemplary comrade.”

In early 1976, to bolster her husband’s slanders against the ICFI and the Security investigation, Reba Hansen had published a glowing tribute to Franklin in the volume *James P. Cannon As We Knew Him*, writing, “Her devotion to the movement and her readiness to put in long hours of hard work inspired us all. Sylvia and I became close collaborators and good personal friends. She was a warm human being.”

The feelings were evidently not mutual. When asked about her time with the SWP, the former GPU agent Franklin stated,

> I don’t see why it’s even important. I was never really in politics. I never read, I never understood it. I was just an immature child, that’s about all I can say.

Of her former “comrades,” Franklin said,

> I haven’t paid any attention, to tell you the truth. I know that during the antiwar demonstrations I heard that name mentioned (the Socialist Workers Party) as being active in the draft.

As for Cannon, to whom Franklin was supposedly the most devoted assistant, she stated callously,

> He wasn’t an important man, in my opinion. Is he? What part did he play in the world?

In the course of the interview, Franklin also confirmed that she had been married to the GPU agent Zalmond Franklin, and that he had fought in Spain during the Civil War. These facts further exposed the fraudulent character of the SWP’s 1947 Control Commission, which claimed to have debunked Budenz’ story on Franklin’s background. More details on this Control Commission would subsequently emerge in 2016, compiled in Eric London’s critical article, “An ‘Exemplary Comrade’: The Socialist Workers Party’s Forty-Year-Long Cover-up of Stalinist Spy Sylvia Callen.”

On May 14, 1977, the ICFI found and interviewed Franklin’s GPU associate Lucy Booker, who fully corroborated that Franklin was a GPU agent, that she came to her apartment to type reports on SWP activities, and that both of them were operating within Jack Soble’s spy ring. She noted that on occasion Soble himself would be present at the apartment while Sylvia Franklin typed up her notes. The interview took place at the very same apartment where Booker was then still living.

These two interviews were the most damning refutation of everything written by Hansen, Novack, the SWP and all their revisionist allies. All of their fawning tributes and feigned indignation over the exposure of Franklin stood exposed as nothing but lies.

On June 26, 1977, one month after the publication of the interview with Franklin, Tim Wohlforth wrote a letter to Jack Barnes on behalf of himself and Nancy Fields, in which he privately acknowledged that Franklin was an agent, stating:

> Both Nancy and I have thought considerably about the latest material from Healy on Caldwell and its implications.…
>
> In any event 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?

The interviews with Franklin and Booker set off alarm bells in the SWP’s headquarters and the office of Joseph Hansen. Clearly, his past role as a GPU agent was becoming impossible to conceal for much longer.

In his third and final public response to the Security investigation, Hansen published an article in the June 20, 1977, issue of *Intercontinental Press* titled, “Healyites Escalate Frame-up of Trotskyist Leaders.” It is a last desperate attempt by Hansen to cover for Franklin. In the course of the article, he casts doubt on the veracity of what he calls “purported interviews” with Franklin and Booker, falsely claiming that neither interview “provides any new information of substance.” The bulk of the article is a diversion, in which Hansen once again attempts to shift the target of the ICFI as actually being James P. Cannon, behind whose authority Hansen again seeks to hide.

Most significantly, towards the end of the article Hansen warns ominously that the ICFI and WRP would face “deadly consequences” should they continue with the Security investigation. Mimicking the Stalinist efforts to whip up a frenzy against Trotsky prior to his assassination through false allegations that he was preparing “violence,” Hansen suggests that the ICFI was “weighing a course of physically attacking Trotskyists” and that “the Healyites are quite capable of initiating physical violence against other sectors of the labor movement.”

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This slander campaign was furthered in an article published in the July 8, 1977 edition of *Intercontinental Press*, in which the SWP falsely accused David North of accosting George Novack and Evelyn Reed, and three Workers League members of assaulting Terie Balius, organizer of the Bronx branch of the SWP. The Workers League immediately challenged these slanders and they were never raised again.

The only violence that took place was against the ICFI. Only four months after the publication of Hansen's final article on the Security investigation, Tom Henehan was killed and Jacques Vielot shot at a Workers League event at the Ponce Social Club in New York City.

The day after Hansen's final article on Security and the Fourth International was published, the *Bulletin* published a response written by the Workers League Political Committee, titled, "Hansen's Big Lie Grows Bigger," which reiterates the significance of the Franklin and Booker interviews and rebuts Hansen's latest lies and diversions.

Joseph Hansen: Dossier of a double agent

In July 1977, one of the most significant developments of the entire Security investigation took place. After the initial uncovering of the September 1, 1940, memorandum by Robert McGregor on Hansen's visit to the US consulate in Mexico City, requests were made for any further documents on Joseph Hansen. At 4 a.m. on a morning in mid-July 1977, Comrade North received a call from Gerry Healy that the documents had arrived and that he should come to England right away.

Dave caught the 9 a.m. flight to London, read through the documents, and over the next few days wrote the statement, "Will the Real Joseph Hansen Please Stand Up," dated July 29, 1977.

The trove of documents, 10 in total, included reports on Hansen's further meetings at the US Embassy in Mexico City, which were sent to the State Department and FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C.

These documents demolished Hansen's lying narrative in his three articles on the Security investigation, and proved definitively that he had become an FBI agent in the immediate aftermath of Trotsky's assassination. All of these meetings took place behind the backs of the SWP leadership and those at the Trotsky household, and had been systematically covered up for 37 years.

The individuals with whom Hansen was meeting and corresponding were not low-level functionaries. On the contrary, all of them were top US intelligence operatives with years or decades of experience and training, each with a single-minded devotion to subverting and disrupting the activities of socialists and left-wing workers in the United States.

It is critical for comrades to be familiar with these documents, so I'll go through the most essential parts of each of them chronologically. All of these documents are compiled in Volume I of *The Gelfand Case*.

First, to remind comrades, the initial document uncovered by the Security investigation was the September 1, 1940 memorandum written by Robert G. McGregor summarizing the meeting he had held with Hansen at the US Embassy in Mexico City the day prior, a Saturday, when embassies are normally closed.

The next nine documents were released in the July 1977 tranche. The second document includes a letter from George P. Shaw to the US Secretary of State, enclosing another McGregor memorandum which records a second visit with Hansen. During this meeting, Hansen gave McGregor a copy of a 72-page document from Trotsky's study.

The third document reports that on September 14, 1940, Hansen gave McGregor a copy of the confidential "W" memorandum prepared by the leadership of the Fourth International. This memorandum records a conversation with a GPU defector and names as Stalinist agents the same persons—except for Alger Hiss—that Whittaker Chambers had secretly turned in to the FBI only two months earlier.

The fourth and fifth documents, both dated September 25, 1940, are letters from Shaw to the US Secretary of State and to R.E. Murphy, a top-level State Department official. Here we see Shaw's second personal letter to Murphy, in which he conveyed "a desire of Mr. Joseph Hansen, secretary to the late Mr. Trotsky, to establish confidential means by which he may be able to communicate with you and through you to this office from New York City." He adds towards the end that Hansen "wishes to be put in touch with someone in your confidence located in New York to whom confidential information could be imparted with impunity."

This is the language of the state and spy agencies, and cannot be interpreted in any other way. Any request for the ability to impart confidential information with impunity, i.e., immunity from prosecution, is the definition of becoming an FBI agent. There is no innocent explanation possible for such a request.

Introducing these documents, we note in *The Gelfand Case*:

> Hansen's request set off a flurry of correspondence within the highest level of the state. The following documents show that Murphy immediately contacted his FBI liaison, J.B. Little, to arrange for Hansen to be interviewed on arrival in New York City.
>
> Murphy was told that Hansen's US contact would be B.E. Sackett, the Special Agent in Charge of the FBI's New York City office. The Hansen contact was so important that Hoover personally instructed Sackett on how to handle Hansen.
>
> Shaw notified Hansen to contact Sackett in a letter to which McGregor added a cryptic handwritten postscript asking "Joe" to acknowledge receipt of the correspondence and to "indicate condition received in."
>
> Hansen wrote Shaw that he received the "letter concerning Mr. Sackett in good condition and shall visit him shortly." Hansen signed his reply "Respectfully."

On the same day that Murphy wrote his letter to J.B. Little, he also wrote to Shaw instructing him to inform Hansen that his FBI contact would be B.E. Sackett.

In Document 8, dated September 30, 1940, Shaw informed Hansen that he should meet Sackett upon his arrival in New York City. Note the "Dear Joe" postscript from McGregor in which he tells Hansen to "Please acknowledge receipt of this and indicate condition received in." Again, this language is that of the spy agencies, always wary of tampering with their communications. In formulating his note this way, McGregor clearly presumes that Hansen would fully understand its meaning, indicating that Hansen was himself already a trained GPU agent.

The following day, J.B. Little sent a memorandum to FBI agent H.L. Clegg. This memo explicitly notes the desire of the FBI to gather further information from Hansen on the death of George Mink, who was a notorious GPU killer who had disappeared shortly before the May 24, 1940 raid on Trotsky's villa.

On the same day that Little's letter was sent, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover sent this letter to Sackett, giving him direct instructions on how Hansen should be dealt with. Concluding the letter, Hoover stresses:

> Should Hansen call at the New York Office, he should be handled tactfully and all information which he can supply and his assistance in this investigation should be obtained. No information, of course, should be furnished him concerning the progress of the investigation by the Bureau. However, every attempt should be

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made to determine the truth of the report concerning George Mink.

The final document, Hansen's reply to Shaw's September 30 letter, is the most damning of all. Its contents should be memorized by all comrades.

> Dear Mr. Shaw, I received your letter concerning Mr. Sackett in good condition and shall visit him shortly. There was a little delay in my receiving your communication due to my absence from New York for some days while I was at Boston. ***Respectfully***, (signed) Joseph Hansen

The language used here by Hansen bears a close reading. It is clearly that of an experienced GPU agent in the process of being turned by the FBI. Again, he fully understood McGregor's cryptic postscript, noting that the letter arrived "in good condition," i.e., without any tampering. Signing "respectfully" his letter to a chief agent of US imperialism, Hansen was expressing deference to his new master.

The historical significance of these documents cannot be overstated. All of this correspondence had been suppressed and withheld from the Trotskyist movement for the previous 37 years. No one in the SWP leadership at the time was aware of Hansen's meetings with the FBI.

As noted in the Introduction to Chapter 1 of *The Gelfand Case*:

> These documents are the most incriminating ever unearthed by the Trotskyist movement. There can be no innocent explanation for such secret meetings with hostile agencies, and none was forthcoming from Hansen or the SWP leadership.

As with all of the major statements of the Security investigation, the initial article on these documents, "Will the Real Joseph Hansen Please Stand Up," places them within their historical context.

The timing of Hansen's meetings with the FBI was highly significant. On June 29, 1940, the Roosevelt administration signed into law the Alien Registration Act. Known as the Smith Act, this was meant to suppress the class struggle and left-wing organizations, as US imperialism prepared to directly enter World War II. A year later, on June 27, 1941, the Smith Act was first invoked, with the FBI sweeping through SWP headquarters in Minneapolis and St. Paul, then two of their strongholds after the 1934 Minneapolis General Strike. The following month, indictments were handed out to 28 SWP leaders, with the trial beginning on October 27, 1941.

On December 8, 1941, the same day Roosevelt declared war on Japan, 18 of the 28 SWP defendants were found guilty and sentenced to jail terms of 12-18 months. Conspicuously absent among the defendants was Joseph Hansen, who as Trotsky's secretary in Coyoacan and now a member of the SWP Political Committee would have been an obvious target of the American state. Based on the FBI documents released in 1977, the true explanation for Hansen's omission came into focus. He had already been turned into a state's informant.

These issues would subsequently be dealt with at length in Eric London's article, "The Smith Act Trial and Government Infiltration of the Trotskyist Movement," which will be examined in Lecture 13.

Joseph Hansen died on January 18, 1979, exactly 18 months after the ICFI first published the second round of 10 documents proving that he was a GPU and FBI agent. His silence throughout this final year and a half of his life underscores that these charges and documents were, in the end, unanswerable.

On August 9, 1977, the *Bulletin* published "An Open Letter to the Membership of the Socialist Workers Party" which was distributed outside the SWP's Oberlin conference that month. Alan Gelfand received this letter and began reading through the Security and the Fourth International materials, prompting him to raise questions inside the conference, which will be dealt with at length in Lecture 10.

The combined publications of the Sylvia Franklin interview and the second tranche of Hansen-FBI correspondence, and the response of Hansen and the SWP leadership, set into motion the events that would ultimately lead to the Gelfand Case, as well as Tom Henehan's assassination, which we will now turn to in the second half of this lecture. Thank you comrades.

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