

The Investigation Whose Name Dare Not Be Mentioned

A review of H. Keith Melton and Nigel West, *The Assassination of Leon Trotsky: Espionage, Scandal, and the Crime of the Century* (New York: Hanover Square Press, 2026), 480 pp.

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The Assassination of Leon Trotsky: Espionage, Scandal, and the Crime of the Century, by H. Keith Melton and Nigel West, is the second book published this year on the monstrous crime carried out by the Stalinist secret police, the GPU, in August 1940. In contrast to the earlier volume by Josh Ireland, which is a typical piece of anti-Trotsky hackwork,^[1] Melton and West express a respect for Trotsky's political genius and his place in history that is absent from virtually all other books on the great Marxist revolutionary produced by bourgeois journalists and academics over the last three decades.

In the Introduction to the volume, the authors acknowledge Trotsky's immense historical role. They write:

As Vladimir Lenin's most brilliant lieutenant and the architect of the Red Army, Trotsky was indispensable to the Bolshevik triumph of 1917. His leadership during the Russian Civil War (1918–1921) and his theory of permanent revolution established him as one of the Revolution's most formidable figures. Yet the same independence, intellect, and internationalist vision that elevated him also ensured his destruction.^[2]

The authors stress that the conflict between Trotsky and Stalin “was not merely personal but ideological: Trotsky's insistence on international revolution clashed irreconcilably with Stalin's doctrine of ‘socialism in one country.’”^[3] Melton and West further note that “By the late 1920s, Trotsky remained the last living embodiment of Lenin's Revolution and the most visible alternative to Stalin's rule.”^[4] The Introduction concludes with the observation that “Stalin sought not merely to silence a man but to extinguish a movement, a lineage, and a legacy.”^[5]

The authors are to be commended for this honest appraisal, all the more so because their professional interests and commitments exclude the possibility of any sympathy for the revolutionary politics of Trotsky.

But notwithstanding the promising Introduction, an appraisal of the new book on the assassination of Leon Trotsky by H. Keith Melton and Nigel West must focus on the contradiction that runs through the volume. The book is largely based on, and accepts, the central findings of Security and the Fourth International, the investigation initiated by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) in May 1975. On the principal questions raised over the past 50 years about the GPU's penetration of the Fourth International—the roles of Joseph Hansen, Sylvia

Callen, Robert Sheldon Harte, Sylvia Ageloff, Lilia Estrin and Mark Zborowski—Melton and West rely on evidence and conclusions developed by that investigation. Their own review of the factual record shatters a half-century of efforts by opponents of the Trotskyist movement to discredit Security and the Fourth International.

This positive element is significantly diminished, however, by the fact that the authors never explicitly identify or explain the investigation in the narrative, let alone acknowledge the extent of their dependence on its work. Its publications appear repeatedly in the notes and bibliography, while the investigation itself is excluded from the narrative and its principal investigators are relegated to the endnotes or omitted altogether.

Instead, Melton and West construct a superficial cover story to explain the origins of their book, and they create a counternarrative that detaches the August 20, 1940 assassination of Trotsky, and the investigation that followed it, from its critical and contemporary political implications. The results of Security and the Fourth International are appropriated for the official historiography of espionage, while the political history of how, by whom, and against whom those results were established is suppressed. The pre-1940 assassination conspiracy is retold in detail. The aftermath of the assassination—the decades-long cover-up inside the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the continuing penetration of the Fourth International by the GPU and the FBI, and the struggle of the International Committee to expose both—is excised in its entirety. What follows examines the authors' counternarrative, what it conceals, and what, despite itself, their book confirms.

The authors

Keith Melton has served for more than 35 years as a consultant to the American intelligence community, and lectures to the CIA, the FBI and the NSA, where he has served as the technical tradecraft historian at the Interagency Training Center. He was a founding board member of the International Spy Museum, which now displays the ice axe used to kill Trotsky—an object he acquired.

Nigel West is the pen name of Rupert Allason, who represented Torbay in Parliament from 1987 to 1997 as a Conservative. He has been European editor of the *World Intelligence Review* and sits on the editorial board of the *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*. He has

lectured at the Centre for Counterintelligence and Security Studies and at CIA headquarters, received the Association of Former Intelligence Officers' first Lifetime Literature Achievement Award in 2003, and was elected to its honorary board in 2011.

They are not naive men. West is an experienced politician who held elected office in Britain for a decade. Melton has devoted himself, by his own account, to studying Trotsky's assassination for more than half a century. Both understand from professional experience how intelligence services operate, what a source is and how provenance matters. The omissions examined below are not those of authors unfamiliar with the material they were using.

An investigation used but never named

The phrase "Security and the Fourth International" appears six times in the book, every occurrence buried in the endnotes. Chapter 2's first endnote cites "Security and the Fourth International: How the GPU Murdered Trotsky [London: Labor Publications, 1976]";^[6] note 68 of the same chapter attributes the work to the International Committee of the Fourth International;^[7] other chapter notes cite the same investigation and identify Eric London's Sylvia Ageloff articles as part of the "Security and the Fourth International" series on the *World Socialist Web Site*.^[8] The bibliography also lists *How the GPU Murdered Trotsky, In Defence of Trotskyism, The Gelfand Case*, Volume 1, *The Sylvia Franklin Dossier*, Eric London's *Agents: The FBI and GPU Infiltration of the Trotskyist Movement*, the four-part WSWS Ageloff series, and David North's "A Tribute to Harold Robins: Captain of Trotsky's Guard."^[9] In all, 42 endnotes across 12 chapters and the introduction rest on ICFI publications, the Gelfand case record, and North's and London's work;^[10] *How the GPU Murdered Trotsky* alone is cited in 12 endnotes and listed in the bibliography.^[11]

Yet the investigation that produced and assembled these materials is never identified, described or explained in the narrative. A reader who does not already know what Security and the Fourth International was will finish the book without learning that it existed. The Gelfand case is not discussed in the narrative. *The Sylvia Franklin Dossier* appears only as a bibliography entry. Nowhere is the reader told that, beginning in May 1975, the International Committee undertook a systematic investigation into GPU penetration of the Fourth International; that it identified SWP leader James P. Cannon's secretary "Sylvia Caldwell" as the GPU agent Sylvia Callen (her maiden name) and published US government documents on Joseph Hansen's contacts with the GPU and FBI; or that Alan Gelfand's litigation forced the public release of the 1954 and 1958 grand-jury transcripts concerning Callen, including her 1958 admissions of espionage—the testimony the book later summarizes without explaining how it became public.^[12]

The International Committee appears only once in the main narrative, in the following passage:

In 1975, the International Committee of the Fourth International revealed that Hansen had been in contact with the FBI through the American consul in Mexico City and had allegedly "played along with the GPU" when they attempted to recruit him earlier. Robins and others concluded from this that Hansen had been a GPU agent, though some historians maintain that he remained loyal to Trotsky until the end.^[13]

The passage is immediately hedged with "allegedly" and "some historians maintain," without explaining what documents the 1975 revelation rested on or how they were obtained. Yet the book's "Cast of Characters" states without qualification that Hansen "provided information to the GPU in 1938 and to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in 1940."^[14] The opening reference work therefore presents as settled fact a central element of what the ICFI had documented, even as the narrative distances itself from this truth.

The same pattern appears in the treatment of Callen. The epilogue states: "Sylvia's role as a GPU agent and her 1958 testimony remained unknown to the public until the mid-1970s."^[15] Unknown until what happened, and made known by whom? The passive construction gestures toward the revelation while omitting the people and investigation that produced it.

That the omission of Security and the Fourth International was not the product of ignorance has since been confirmed by Melton himself. At the International Spy Museum event in Washington on August 6, 2026, Eric London asked Melton about his reliance on Security and the Fourth International. Melton replied: "Many of their contentions were absolutely right." He added: "As a researcher, that's one of the indispensable resources... I use that, and I thought it was an excellent source."

What the book confirms

Whatever ambiguity of tone the authors permit themselves on this or that question, their book nowhere challenges the legitimacy of the ICFI's allegations and findings. Across 456 pages and nearly a thousand endnotes, written by two historians of espionage with access to Moscow sources and every motive to correct the record, the findings of Security and the Fourth International are never challenged, let alone refuted. They are incorporated, though without acknowledgment, into the authors' presentation of the conspiracy. This is now a matter of record, established by authors who share none of the ICFI's politics, and it is the fact from which any assessment of the book must proceed.

It should be set against the way those findings were received when first published. Hansen denounced the investigation's preliminary findings as a "geyser of mud."^[16] In September 1976, *Intercontinental Press*, the Hansen-edited journal of the Pabloites (the international grouping, led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel, from which the International Committee had separated in 1953), published a "Verdict" that proscribed Security and the Fourth International as a "shameless frame-up." It asserted that the International Committee had produced not "the slightest probative evidence, documents, or testimony" to substantiate its accusations.^[17]

The lawsuit initiated by Alan Gelfand in July 1979, alleging state infiltration and takeover of the SWP, was based on the documents obtained through Security and the Fourth International. On July 12, 1982, Judge Mariana Pfaelzer denied the SWP's final motion for the disposal of Gelfand's case through summary judgment. The judge ruled that Gelfand had overcome the legal hurdle and presented triable issues of fact.^[18]

Melton and West confirm the investigation's findings on each of the individuals it identified. But in every case, even where they concede that these individuals were agents, or could very possibly have been agents, they decline to address the implications. Each finding is admitted as an isolated fact about 1940 and stripped of its consequences for everything that followed. Both sides of this pattern—what the book concedes, and what it will not follow—deserve to be traced through each of the five figures, besides Zborowski, on whom the investigation centered.

Robert Sheldon Harte. The book states that Harte, the guard who disappeared during the first attempt to assassinate Trotsky in May 1940, was "recruited by the GPU" and "opened the gate for Iosif Grigulevich

and the raiders.”^[19] This was among the most bitterly contested findings of the ICFI investigation. When the International Committee raised the Harte question in 1975, Joseph Hansen answered that “the odor of the old GPU slanders against Harte, we see, still persists in the headquarters of the Workers Revolutionary Party.”^[20] The SWP had memorialized Harte as a martyr. Melton and West now confirm that the man whom the SWP defended for decades against the “slander” of the ICFI let the assassins in. What Hansen called the “old GPU slanders” in 1975 is now the settled finding of two historians of the intelligence community. They say nothing about who defended him, for how long, and against whom.

Sylvia Callen (a.k.a. Sylvia Franklin, Sylvia Caldwell, Sylvia Doxsee). On no individual is the book’s confirmation more emphatic and nowhere are its implications more damning. Melton and West present Cannon’s secretary—the GPU agent SATYR—as an essential figure in the assassination itself. The murder, they write, was conceived in Moscow and executed in Coyoacán, but it depended on an invisible network spun in New York, whose decisive breakthrough was “the quiet operative who opened the gates: Sylvia Callen.” Her infiltration of the SWP’s national headquarters gave Soviet intelligence what it needed “to ensure that, when the moment came, the killer would not miss.”^[21] Her reports flowed to Leonid Eitingon, the GPU field commander in Mexico City who directed both assassination attempts. Without them, the authors acknowledge, the GPU’s operatives would have had “diminished visibility into the Old Man’s villa.” “In Stalin’s war against Trotsky,” they conclude, “Sylvia Callen was no footnote.” If Harte physically opened the door during the May raid, “it was Callen who—figuratively—placed the key in his hand and helped swing the gate wide.”^[22]

This acknowledgment vindicates the detailed attention the ICFI and the Gelfand case devoted to Callen’s role, which was denounced for decades as obsession and smear. If her espionage materially assisted the planning of the assassination, investigating her role was plainly relevant to investigating the crime. It also exposes the criminal character of her unrelenting defense by SWP and international Pabloite leaders who knew she was an agent. Those leaders were defending a participant in the GPU operation that, on Melton and West’s own account, helped make Trotsky’s murder possible.

In 1947, after information that the GPU had an agent in the SWP national office reached Cannon, the SWP convened a Control Commission, which resolved that there was “no basis for suspicion” of her.^[23] She left the party soon afterward. When Louis Budenz publicly identified her in 1950, party leaders continued to defend her, as they would for decades. In 1975 Hansen wrote in *Intercontinental Press* that “Sylvia Caldwell (that was her party name) worked very hard in her rather difficult assignment of managing the office of the Socialist Workers Party,” and that the comrades who worked with her “burned as much as she did over the foul slander spread by Budenz.” George Novack likewise denounced the “reckless and indiscriminate allegations” against her.^[24]

The Security and the Fourth International investigation conclusively established—against the denials, slanders and threats of the SWP—that Callen-Caldwell had been a GPU agent. In May 1977 North and Alex Mitchell located her in Wheaton, Illinois, where they photographed and confronted her. Then living under the name Doxsee, she feigned amnesia and affected hysteria.^[25]

The 1954 and 1958 grand jury transcripts in which Callen, who had remarried and was identified as Sylvia Doxsee, confessed her espionage—cited by Melton and West as though they were ordinary archival records—exist in the public domain for one reason alone: the Gelfand case. Gelfand’s litigation forced them into the open, and it did so against the bitter resistance of the SWP, whose attorneys petitioned the court during the trial to oppose their release. In March 1983, at the conclusion of the trial, Judge Pfaelzer released the transcripts over these objections. Less than one hour before the transcripts were released, SWP

national secretary Jack Barnes testified in open court that Callen-Caldwell-Doxsee was “a loyal, hard-working, and model member of our movement” and “one of my heroes.”^[26]

The investigation also uncovered why the SWP adhered so relentlessly, for 35 years, to the claim that Cannon’s secretary was the victim of a frame-up. A document obtained by Gelfand in discovery recorded that Budenz, who had exposed Caldwell to the FBI, had also identified Joseph Hansen as a Stalinist agent. In a private letter written in June 1976 to Hansen, his long-time associate Vaughn T. O’Brien recalled an encounter with Pearl Kluger, who had served in 1937 as the manager of the office of the Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky. Kluger, who had known Budenz since the mid-1930s, bluntly warned O’Brien: “Budenz says your friend Joe Hansen worked with the GPU.”^[27]

This information exposed the reasons for Hansen’s and the SWP’s unrelenting insistence, despite mounting evidence, on the “exemplary” role of Sylvia Callen-Caldwell. For the SWP to accept Budenz’s allegations against Caldwell as true would have exposed Hansen. And the fact that Budenz never publicly named Hansen pointed to a still darker conclusion: that the FBI had vetoed his exposure because Hansen was functioning as a high-level informer inside the SWP leadership.

Five weeks after the conclusion of the Gelfand trial, in the April 15, 1983, edition of *The Militant*, the SWP leaders informed their members for the first time of what they had known for years: that Budenz had named “several SWP members as Soviet agents. Among these were Joseph Hansen, a central leader of the SWP until his death in 1979...”^[28] Even after this staggering admission, the cover-up persisted. In May 1983 Barnes told the SWP national committee that the grand jury transcripts in which Caldwell confessed her espionage had been forged: “This is supposed to be the perfect frame—an official transcript, in which the woman under oath herself says that she did things she was accused of doing.”^[29] Melton and West reduce this entire history to the observation that “disbelief persisted within the SWP” and a diagnosis of “institutional naiveté.”^[30] The words describe an unrelenting cover-up as though it were an innocent state of mind.

Lilia Estrin (Lola Dallin). The book’s narrative documents a repeated pattern in which Estrin vouched for or assisted Mark Zborowski, the GPU’s most important agent inside the Trotskyist movement, at critical points. She defended “Etienne” (the party name used by Zborowski) against suspicions raised around Trotsky’s household, was implicated in the fatal decision that placed Sedov in the Clinique Mirabeau, where he was murdered, and accompanied Zborowski at the September 1938 introduction of Sylvia Ageloff and Ramón Mercader (using the alias “Jacques Mornard”) to delegates of the founding conference.

She later arranged Zborowski’s escape in 1941 from Vichy France and his immigration into the United States, then provided cover for him there until 1955, when Alexander Orlov exposed him. Orlov, a senior GPU officer who had defected in 1938, had warned Trotsky that December, in an anonymous letter, that “Etienne” was a GPU agent—a letter Trotsky showed to Estrin herself. The book concludes that “whatever her intent,” her actions aligned with Zborowski’s designs and the GPU’s interests, while the “Cast of Characters” labels her a “Possible GPU agent.”^[31] It then stresses that the VENONA material “remains inherently ambiguous and is capable of neither proving Lilia Estrin’s complicity as a GPU agent nor establishing her innocence.”^[32] The evidence the book itself assembles points to a plain conclusion: across 15 years, on two continents, through the murders of Wolf, Reiss, Sedov and Klement, every one of Estrin’s interventions served the GPU, and she functioned as an agent in everything except formal designation, whether or not she ever signed a receipt.

Sylvia Ageloff. From its early chapters onward, the book repeats the myth of “poor little Sylvia”—the narrative that depicts Ageloff as an emotionally vulnerable social worker deceived by Mercader (alias Jacques

Mornard)—and even devotes a chapter to her under the title “The Dupe: Love as a Weapon.”^[33] A later chapter, “Fortune’s Fool,” sharply revises that picture, arguing that the story of her innocence endured because it was useful in obscuring Ageloff’s role as the indispensable enabler of the assassin. That later analysis relies openly on Eric London’s four-part 2021 investigation,^[34] which is quoted at length, supplies the chapter’s epigraph and its governing thesis, and is cited in 15 endnotes across seven chapters.^[35] Melton and West call London a “historian” but do not explain in the narrative that the series was published on the *World Socialist Web Site* as part of the continuing Security and the Fourth International investigation.

They write that London “introduced no new archive” and that their chapter “reaches the same conclusion through independent analysis.”^[36] The authors make no attempt to reconcile the contradictory treatments of Ageloff in the two halves of their book. Nor can the contradiction be explained by a late encounter with London’s work: the earlier chapters, including “The Dupe,” already cite his articles. The book simply sets the two accounts side by side, without reconciling them and without explaining the investigation from which the new findings came. And once again the implication is severed: the book never asks who maintained the myth of Ageloff’s innocence for 80 years, or observes that Hansen, in 1975, was still describing her as “a trusted member of the Trotskyist movement who did not have the faintest idea of [Mercader’s] real identity.”^[37]

In the cases of Estrin and Ageloff, the narrative Melton and West have assembled confronts the reader with two possibilities. Either these were women of unfathomable stupidity, who wandered blindly through conspiracy and murder—vouching for assassins, escorting a killer to his victim’s door, standing at the center of every catastrophe—while comprehending nothing; or they were agents. The authors decline to choose, extending to both women an agnosticism their own evidence has dissolved. But only one of the alternatives is credible. Ageloff was a trained psychologist; Estrin operated for years at the center of the Fourth International’s European organization, trusted by Sedov and by Trotsky himself. Neither was a fool. Melton and West avoid a direct answer to the question their book poses. The question, on their own evidence, answers itself.

Joseph Hansen. The exposure of Hansen as a double agent of the GPU and FBI by the Security and the Fourth International investigation is suppressed and its implications evaded. Melton and West do not challenge the exposure. The “Cast of Characters” states that Hansen “provided information to the GPU in 1938 and to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in 1940.”^[38] But the book fails to examine what either relationship was, what the FBI relationship became, or what it means that the man who maintained it rose to the leadership of the SWP and the international Pabloite United Secretariat.

The documentary record uncovered by the International Committee established that 10 days after Trotsky’s assassination, Hansen initiated a series of secret meetings, unknown to the SWP, with US consular officials in Mexico City, and that he told them of his 1938 relationship with a GPU agent who identified himself only as “John.” Before returning to New York, Hansen asked to be put in touch with someone “to whom confidential information could be imparted with impunity.”^[39]

From the mid-1950s until his death in 1979, Hansen was the principal leader of the SWP and a major figure in the Pabloite movement. From that position he orchestrated the cover-up and the vicious slander campaign against the International Committee and Gerry Healy. The book’s single hedged sentence on the 1975 revelations, with its anonymous “some historians” who “maintain that he remained loyal to Trotsky until the end,” is the sum total of its engagement with this history. On the book’s own stated facts, Hansen was an undisclosed FBI contact inside Trotsky’s secretariat. Having recorded the fact, the authors abandon it, because

following it would lead directly to conclusions their book is constructed to avoid.

A superficial origin story

In a preface titled “Why This Book, Why Now, Why These Authors,” Melton and West state: “This book is the result of more than five decades of investigation into one of the twentieth century’s most consequential political assassinations: the murder of Leon Trotsky.”^[40] The characterization deserves attention, because it is not the conventional one. The prevailing verdict of the contemporary anti-Marxist literature is that Trotsky was merely a politically isolated exile by 1940 and that his murder, however tragic, was of little consequence. The insistence on the assassination’s historic and political significance has been, for 50 years, the position of the International Committee. In an article posted on October 16, 2015, the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote:

“The assassination of Leon Trotsky ranks among the most politically consequential crimes of the twentieth century, with far-reaching implications for the international working class and the world socialist movement.”^[41]

In the Introduction to his comprehensive and ground breaking analysis of “Sylvia Ageloff and the assassination of Leon Trotsky,” posted on the WWSW on February 5, 2021, Eric London stated: “The murder of Leon Trotsky is the most consequential political assassination of the 20th century.”^[42]

That Melton and West open their book by adopting this assessment, virtually verbatim, is the first indication of an influence that runs through the entire volume and is nowhere acknowledged. What has been borrowed is not a random phrase but a political judgment. Of the investigation from which that judgment derives, however, the preface says nothing. It offers instead an account of the book’s origins that is remarkably trivial.

Their interest began, they write, “in the early 1970s,” when Melton first read *Murder in Mexico* by Leandro Sánchez Salazar, the colonel who led the Mexican police investigation of the assassination. The answers to how the assassination was planned, they continue, “required years to assemble”: the authors “traveled to Moscow, examined declassified intelligence files, interviewed retired Soviet intelligence officers, and gained access to unpublished family archives that reshaped the historical understanding of the assassination.”^[43]

It is possible that Melton came across Sánchez Salazar’s book in the early 1970s. Perhaps it kindled his interest in the assassination. But the dates the authors claim for the awakening of their passionate interest also coincide with the initiation, in May 1975, of the Security and the Fourth International investigation—the event that transformed the study of Trotsky’s assassination from a closed case into an open one.

Before 1975, the popular narrative centered heavily on Mercader and Ageloff, even though evidence of a much wider GPU conspiracy already existed in the public record. US Senate investigations in the 1950s and the prosecutions of Jack Soble and Mark Zborowski placed sworn testimony about GPU operations inside the Trotskyist movement into official transcripts. The SWP and its political allies among the Pabloite tendencies almost entirely ignored the investigations and prosecutions. The trial and conviction of Mark Zborowski in a New York City courtroom on charges of perjury related to his role as a GPU agent went unreported in *The Militant*. It was the ICFI that first examined the official records

systematically and made them the starting point for a deeper investigation into state penetration of the Trotskyist movement, historical and contemporary.

The questions of how the GPU penetrated the Fourth International and the SWP, who its agents inside the movement were, and how the security of Trotsky's household was compromised from within were thereby placed on the historical and contemporary political agenda—and those are the questions that structure Melton and West's book. The entire text closely tracks the ICFI's investigation.

Melton, the senior of the two authors, has by his own account been focused on the subject since the very years in which the ICFI investigation began. He would have been aware of it and followed it through every stage of its development: the initial reports of 1975, the publication of *How the GPU Murdered Trotsky*, the exposure of Sylvia Callen in 1977, the Gelfand litigation of 1979–1983, and the continuation of the investigation on the *World Socialist Web Site*, from which his own book quotes.

Even if one accepts that Sánchez Salazar's book sparked his interest in Trotsky's assassination, that very interest would have made him aware of the investigation that was initiated by the International Committee in May 1975. This is not speculation. The footnotes and bibliography cite extensively, as we have already stressed, from the Security and the Fourth International publications.

The ICFI investigation did not arise from antiquarian interest or the chance discovery of a book. Its immediate background was a security crisis in the Workers League in 1974 involving Tim Wohlforth, then national secretary, and his companion Nancy Fields, a provocateur whose family connections to a senior CIA official had not been disclosed to the party. The Workers League's decision to suspend Fields from membership pending an investigation into her family background was denounced as "paranoia" by Joseph Hansen, a long-time leader of the US Socialist Workers Party.^[44] This response was extraordinary given that Hansen had witnessed Trotsky's assassination in 1940, and was thoroughly familiar with the terrible price the Fourth International had paid for negligence in matters of security.

The initial purpose of the investigation was to educate the cadre of the Trotskyist movement by studying and drawing the appropriate political lessons of the security failures that made the 1940 assassination possible.

The investigators unmentioned

The authors claim that the discovery of Sánchez Salazar's book "ignited a pursuit that would span decades, carrying the authors across continents, deep into archives, and into the homes of those who inherited the secrets of Stalin's most carefully concealed war."^[45] Remarkably, however, neither Melton nor West, in the course of their decades-long and world-wide investigation, made any attempt to contact the International Committee of the Fourth International, which was engaged in an unprecedented and exhaustive public investigation of the assassination.

David North, who played a central role in the development of Security and the Fourth International from almost immediately after the investigation was initiated, appears only in three endnotes and the bibliography, identified solely as the author of an obituary of Harold Robins.^[46] Alex Mitchell, the highly skilled journalist and editor of the *News Line* (organ of the British Workers Revolutionary Party) who played a critical investigative role in the initial stages of the investigation and with whom North worked closely in the writing of the initial documents published in 1975–77 under the title *Security and the Fourth International*, goes entirely unmentioned. Mitchell's extensive account of the

investigation in his 2011 memoir, *Come the Revolution*, is not even referenced in the authors' bibliography.

North's role is extensively documented in the publications the authors cite. North located Mark Zborowski in San Francisco and photographed him and his wife outside their apartment in August 1975—photographs included in *How the GPU Murdered Trotsky*, in the edition brilliantly designed by David King.^[47] (The authors know King's work; their bibliography lists both his *Trotsky: A Photographic Biography* and Deutscher and King's *The Great Purges*.)

North traveled to Mexico in 1976 and 1977; interviewed Eduardo Cenicerros, Mercader's attorney, and photographed the cover of a letter from the assassin to his lawyer; interviewed Alfonso Quiroz Cuarón, the criminologist who in 1950 established the true identity of the man who called himself "Jacques Mornard" and "Frank Jacson"; and interviewed the Mexican journalist Eduardo Téllez Vargas.^[48] Cenicerros and Quiroz Cuarón figure prominently in the book's narrative, but without a single reference to the interviews in which these men gave their testimony to the ICFI's investigation. And it was North who, in May 1977, located Sylvia Callen, as recounted above.

The authors quote Trotsky's chilling anticipation of his own murder, delivered to journalist Téllez Vargas on August 17, 1940: "I will be killed either by one of them in here or by one of my friends from the outside, by someone who has access to the house. Because Stalin cannot spare my life."^[49] The source given in their endnote is "Leon Trotsky, quoted in Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast: Trotsky, 1929–1940* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1963], 503."^[50] No such interview appears in Deutscher's biography. The attribution to Deutscher's biography is entirely fabricated. The quotation is reproduced exactly from Téllez Vargas's own account, given in his interview with North for the Security and the Fourth International investigation.

North's interview with Eduardo Téllez Vargas was conducted in Mexico City on December 20, 1976, and was published in early 1977 in a printed folio size volume titled *Trotsky's Assassin At Large*. As cited in the chapter "Security at Coyoacan," Téllez Vargas told North:

"There came a moment when Trotsky trusted absolutely nobody. He trusted in no one. He didn't specify or name names, but he did say to me: 'I will be killed either by one of them in here or by one of my friends from the outside, by someone who has access to the house. Because Stalin cannot spare my life.'" ^[51]

There is no innocent explanation for the false attribution of Téllez Vargas's statement to Deutscher's volume, where no reference to Téllez Vargas or his statement is to be found. This is a case of deliberate concealment. Citing its actual source would have required naming the investigation. The result is a false provenance for one of the most important pieces of testimony in the historical record, and a small but exact illustration of the book's method: the findings of the investigation are used, and their origin is erased.

Finally, there is the omission that is hardest to explain. Although Melton and West traveled the globe to speak to Russian intelligence officials and tracked down descendants of individuals who served on Trotsky's guard in Coyoacán, they never approached the International Committee or David North—publicly active, easily reached, and the chairman of the International Editorial Board of the publication from which the authors quote.

An interview with North, or even a routine request for comment, would have made the concealment impossible to sustain. The investigation would have acquired a face and a history, and its claim to its own findings could no longer have been ignored. Silence toward the living principal

investigator was as necessary as silence about the investigation itself, if its results were to be presented as the anonymous common stock of “what is known.”

The omission of the assassination’s aftermath

The book’s account of the political conspiracy effectively closes with the assassination of Trotsky. The chapters that follow focus on Mercader’s imprisonment, identification, possible escape schemes and later life, along with biographical codas and the provenance of the murder weapon.

But the central discovery of Security and the Fourth International was that the conspiracy against the Fourth International did not end on August 20, 1940. There is an unbroken line of continuity from the penetration of the 1930s, through the assassination in August 1940, into the decades that followed, and the book’s periodization severs it. The agents remained in place. Callen sat in Cannon’s office until 1947. Zborowski, brought to the United States through the extraordinary efforts of Lola Dallin and George Novack, operated there into the 1950s. Hansen rose to the head of the party and engineered the SWP’s break with the International Committee in 1963. As a major leader of the “United Secretariat” and editor of *Intercontinental Press*, he was able to infiltrate agents into Pabloite organizations throughout the world.

The high value placed by the US government on Hansen’s services inside the SWP is visible as early as 1941, in an episode the book never mentions. In that year the leadership of the SWP and of Teamsters Local 544 was indicted under the Smith Act in the Minneapolis trial; 18 defendants were convicted and imprisoned, in the American government’s first peacetime prosecution of its kind.^[52] Joseph Hansen, Trotsky’s former secretary and one of the party’s most prominent figures, was not among the indicted. Eric London’s *Agents* devotes extensive, carefully documented analysis to this extraordinary exclusion, and demonstrates that Hansen’s absence from the indictment was necessary because he was already working as an FBI informant inside the SWP. Melton and West cite *Agents* repeatedly in their chapter on Callen^[53] and praise London’s work on Ageloff. But they pass over his findings on the Minneapolis trial in complete silence.

The line continues. In 1947 came the SWP’s whitewash of Callen, which the party maintained after Budenz publicly identified her in 1950. For nearly three decades thereafter, the party that had been penetrated conducted no investigation of its own penetration. When the International Committee opened Security and the Fourth International in May 1975, undertaking for the first time to establish the truth, “warts and all,” in the words of the Workers Revolutionary Party’s 1975 statement,^[54] the response of the SWP and its international allies was an organized counterattack. Members who sought answers were threatened.

In January 1977 a London rally attended by roughly 1,500 members of Pabloite organizations denounced the investigation, echoing the “Verdict” that had branded it a “shameless frame-up,” and defended Hansen and Novack. It was presided over by Tariq Ali, an unprincipled middle-class demagogue and a leader of the British section of the Pabloite movement, who subsequently abandoned any association with Trotskyism. The gathering was justly denounced by the International Committee as the “Platform of Shame”. For two hours, the speakers hurled vile abuse at Gerry Healy, who was seated in the audience. When at the conclusion of the tirades Healy rose to request that he be allowed to answer, Tariq Ali denied him that right and shut down the meeting.

The event was reported in the mainstream press.^[55] Melton and West claim an investigation reaching back to that very period; they cannot have

been unaware of it.

Four months after the rally came the confrontation of North and Mitchell with Callen-Doxsee in Wheaton, Illinois. Hansen responded to her exposure by warning of “deadly consequences” for the International Committee.^[56] In October 1977, Tom Henehan, a 26-year-old member of the Workers League Political Committee, was murdered in New York City.^[57]

When Alan Gelfand wrote to the SWP national committee in March 1978, reviewing the documents and demanding that Sylvia Franklin be repudiated as a GPU agent and that Hansen give a full accounting of his dealings with the GPU and FBI, the reply came from Larry Seigle on behalf of the Political Committee: “The Party cannot and will not allow agent-baiting within its ranks. Any further repetition by you of the Healyite slanders will not be tolerated.” In December 1978 Gelfand filed a friend-of-the-court brief demanding that the US attorney general disclose the names of all government informants in the SWP, past and present. One month later, the SWP expelled him.^[58] In 1979 Gelfand began the litigation that ultimately brought Sylvia Callen’s grand jury testimony into public view and placed Zborowski under subpoena.

And the investigation’s discoveries reached into the SWP’s contemporary leadership: virtually the entire post-Cannon and post-Dobbs leadership of the party had been drawn in the 1960s from a single small institution, Carleton College in Minnesota, and the college’s former dean, Richard C. Gilman, told the International Committee that the Carleton graduates had been “plugged into” the SWP through the Fair Play for Cuba Committee—an organization manipulated by the CIA and the FBI. Among that Carleton cohort was Jack Barnes, who became the SWP’s national secretary.^[59]

None of this appears in Melton and West’s narrative: not the 1941 Minneapolis trial, the SWP’s 1947 whitewash of Callen, the 1977 Platform of Shame travesty, the assassination of Henehan, Gelfand’s lawsuit, the infiltration of the SWP leadership by Carleton College students. The post-1940 cover-up and the ongoing infiltration of the Fourth International by the GPU and the FBI form an essential and politically critical element of the story of the assassination and its consequences. The cover-up was the continuation of the conspiracy. To tell the story of Trotsky’s assassination while excluding the struggle waged by the International Committee against the defense of GPU and FBI agents inside the Trotskyist movement is to stage Hamlet without the prince.

The promotion of Susan Weissman

Why do authors omit an investigation whose findings they accept? Consider what the omission accomplishes. The book substitutes a counternarrative in which the foundational role of the Trotskyist movement in exposing the GPU conspiracy against Trotsky—and, following the assassination, the ongoing penetration of the Fourth International by both the GPU and the FBI—has no place.

A counternarrative requires a scholarly authority, and the authors’ choice reveals its character. The book anoints Susan Weissman—“scholar Susan Weissman, whose research on Mark Zborowski remains foundational”^[60]—and cites her in 26 endnotes, more than any source connected to the actual investigation of Zborowski.

Weissman was a member of the SWP. There is nothing “foundational” about her work on Zborowski. Her work consists largely of diluting the facts uncovered by Security and the Fourth International with evasions and lies.

She has been active in Pabloite politics for decades, is a member of the

Solidarity organization, formed largely by ex-members of the SWP, and joined the editorial board of its journal *Against the Current* in 1986. She has been an unwavering defender of Hansen and his accomplices, and she continues to this day her efforts to discredit the ICFI's investigation. She supported the expulsion of Alan Gelfand from the SWP. In private correspondence with former Trotskyist Albert Glotzer, she described Security and the Fourth International as "garbage," and complained, of Soviet-Russian historian Dmitri Volkogonov's account of Trotsky's assassination, that "he bases himself not only on [GPU agent] Sudoplatov, but even worse on the American Healyites (or 'Northites') from the 'Gelfand Case'"—a formulation in which the investigators of Trotsky's assassination rank below one of its organizers.^[61]

In her published work she has described the Gelfand case as "frivolous and groundless."^[62] Her account of Zborowski is riddled with factual errors; the book itself has to correct her in its endnotes ("Weissman, 607, incorrectly states that 'it was at this meeting that Sylvia Ageloff met Ramón...')." ^[63] David North answered her willfully deceptive articles in a 2015 open letter, "Security and the Fourth International, the Gelfand Case and the Deposition of Mark Zborowski," in which he exposed Weissman as a liar.^[64] North has never retracted this charge and Weissman has never answered it.

The most important fact about Weissman's account of Zborowski is what she concealed: the alliance of the SWP with Zborowski and the United States government to block the questioning of the GPU's chief agent inside the Fourth International.

The record is as follows. In February 1982, Judge Pfaelzer granted Gelfand 90 days of discovery, and his attorneys subpoenaed Zborowski. Here, at last, was the opportunity for the Trotskyist movement to interrogate, under oath, the man who had played a central role in the murders of Erwin Wolf, Ignace Reiss, Leon Sedov and Rudolf Klement—to question him at length about the assassination, the methods of the GPU and the identity of agents inside the SWP, and to pin him down on the precise roles of Lilia Dallin, Joseph Hansen and others. The Socialist Workers Party immediately petitioned the court for a protective order blocking the deposition. Asked under oath, "Is it your job to protect GPU agents?", Jack Barnes replied: "It is my job to protect the rights of American citizens... Even Mr. Zborowski has the same rights as any other citizen in this country."^[65]

The court rejected the SWP's petition, and the deposition went forward on April 15, 1982. The United States government attended: an attorney representing CIA Director William Casey, FBI Director William Webster and Attorney General William French Smith sat in on the questioning, while Zborowski's own counsel worked closely with the attorneys for the SWP. Zborowski answered questions about his identity and then invoked the Fifth Amendment against everything else—his entry into the United States in 1941, arranged by Dallin and Novack; his activities on behalf of the Soviet secret police inside the SWP; his knowledge of the GPU's international apparatus within the Trotskyist movement from 1930 onward.

When Gelfand's attorneys moved to compel answers, the court ruled, in January 1983, that testimony identifying agents inside the SWP could expose Zborowski to prosecution under the newly enacted Intelligence Identities Protection Act of 1982. Zborowski was saved from answering questions posed by Gelfand's attorneys—with the critical assistance of his defenders in the Socialist Workers Party—by a federal law making it a crime to identify government agents inside that organization. Thus ended the only opportunity the Trotskyist movement would ever have to interrogate Mark Zborowski. The GPU killer died in 1990, taking many secrets—including the identities of his fellow GPU agents in the Trotskyist movement—to his grave.^[66]

Weissman supported this intervention and continues to support it. In her published account, she disposes of the episode by cynical mockery:

Zborowski, she writes, "ran rings around Gelfand and his attorney," proving "himself a master at revealing nothing, taking the fifth and making fools of his questioners."^[67] Every element of this is a falsification of the legal record. Zborowski ran rings around no one. He sat mutely and visibly nervous in the deposition room. He was rescued by the combined efforts of the SWP's attorneys, his own counsel and the United States government, invoking a statute passed while the case was in progress. And the scene Weissman works to efface—the SWP standing alongside the CIA, the FBI and the attorney general of the United States to shield a GPU assassin from questions about his role in the murder of Trotsky's son and other leading Trotskyists as well as the broader network of agents in the Socialist Workers Party—is the single most concentrated expression of everything Security and the Fourth International had uncovered. Weissman built her fraudulent Zborowski "scholarship" around the suppression of this record.

This is the writer whose research Melton and West pronounce "foundational." There is no basis for the unjustified praise. They know Weissman's judgments about the agents cannot be trusted, because their own pages overrule them: they record her insistence on Estrin's innocence and conclude, on the evidence, that Estrin sustained the GPU's most important agent at every juncture. They reject Weissman's exculpations and praise her anyway. Her value to the book lies elsewhere. A veteran of the organization that conducted the cover-up, a lifelong opponent of the investigation, she is the one writer on Zborowski who can be relied upon never to name Security and the Fourth International, never to recount what actually happened at the deposition, and never to describe the SWP-US Government alliance that quashed it.

All the legal documents related to Alan Gelfand's efforts to subpoena Zborowski, as well as the transcript of the GPU agent's deposition of April 15, 1982, are published in the two-volume record of *The Gelfand Case*. Although the first volume appears in the Melton-West bibliography and is cited twice in the endnotes,^[68] neither the documents nor the deposition are cited.

Blaming the victim

The book's unwillingness to engage with Security and the Fourth International produces, in the end, an untenable conclusion. In a chapter titled "The Revolutionary Who Forgot to Fight Back," the authors assert that Trotsky "fatally underestimated the one adversary he should have understood best"^[69] and open the chapter with an epigraph, attributed to the CIA analyst Rita T. Kronenbitter, declaring that Trotsky died "from a failure to believe in betrayal."^[70] The chapter treats Kronenbitter's 1972 article in the CIA's in-house journal *Studies in Intelligence*, "Leon Trotsky, Dupe of the NKVD,"^[71] as "among the most penetrating" assessments of Trotsky's failure.^[72]

This is false, and Melton and West, of all people, are in a position to know it. No serious student of intelligence holds the target of an assassination responsible for his own security; that responsibility rests with the apparatus charged with protecting him. It is also contradicted by the historical record. Trotsky, who built the Red Army and led it through the Civil War, was an expert on questions of security, and the last years of his life were consumed by the fight to expose the Stalinist secret police and to arm the workers' movement against it.

On November 2, 1937, in the wake of the murders of Ignace Reiss and Erwin Wolf and the GPU's extermination campaign in Spain, Trotsky wrote an open letter, "It Is High Time to Launch a World Offensive Against Stalinism."^[73] The Moscow frame-ups, he wrote, had been designed "as a starting point for a crushing offensive against the

opponents of the Moscow clique on the world arena.” He demanded “a regime of rigid mistrust of everyone directly or indirectly connected with the Stalinist apparatus” and called on workers’ organizations to “tirelessly gather printed material, documents, testimonials of witnesses” on the GPU’s crimes and publish rigorously substantiated conclusions. In a separate September 1937 article written after Reiss’s assassination, Trotsky likewise insisted that “the sole serious defense against the hired murderers of Stalin is complete publicity.”^[74] Exposure before the working class was Trotsky’s answer to infiltration and assassination.

After the machine-gun raid of May 24, 1940, Trotsky devoted much of his remaining time to exposing the conspiracy. In “Stalin Seeks My Death,” completed on June 8, he identified the GPU as organizer of the assault and predicted another attempt: “The accidental failure of the assault, so carefully and so ably prepared, is a serious blow to Stalin. The GPU must rehabilitate itself with Stalin. Stalin must demonstrate his power. A repetition of the attempt is inevitable.”^[75] This was the same man who, as recounted above, told Téllez Vargas on August 17—three days before his assassination—that the blow would come from someone with access to the house, because Stalin could not spare his life.

This is the record that Melton and West ask the reader to reconcile with a Trotsky who “forgot to fight back” and suffered from a “failure to believe in betrayal.” A man who wrote that another attempt on his life was inevitable did not fail to believe in betrayal. He was betrayed by the organization responsible for his protection. What Trotsky could not do was choose the men his party sent to guard him. That task belonged to the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party, and the apparatus it dispatched to Mexico had been compromised.

What the book adds

The book is not without certain strengths. The material gathered in Moscow and the Spanish-language sources fill in operational details of the conspiracy; the pre-1940 planning is retold effectively. What the book does not do is alter the structure of the conspiracy, which Security and the Fourth International laid bare 50 years earlier. Even its physical reconstruction of the Coyoacán villa—the location of the alarm panel, the arrangement of the beds during the May 24 raid—adds little to the description provided by North in “Trotsky’s Assassin At Large.” The fate of the ice axe with which Trotsky was murdered—the subject of the book’s afterword and the prize exhibit of the museum Melton co-founded—is peripheral to the conspiracy. The weapon’s passage through police lockers, private collections and auction rooms belongs to the history of collecting, not to the history of the crime.

More serious is the emphasis the authors place on the possibility that Trotsky might have survived the attack, which is speculation. But whether an injury of the type sustained by Trotsky in 1940 might be treatable in 2026 is of no historical significance. It changes nothing about the planning, execution and aftermath of the assassination.

Conclusion

To the extent that it deals with facts, Melton and West’s book substantiates the Security and the Fourth International investigation, and it stands, despite itself, as a devastating exposure of the decades-long campaign to discredit this investigation. Their book confirms the central findings the Trotskyist movement established half a century ago: that the

GPU penetrated the Socialist Workers Party at the highest level; that Hansen maintained undisclosed relations with the GPU and the FBI; that Harte opened the gate; that Callen delivered the movement’s secrets to Stalin’s police for a decade; that Ageloff was the indispensable enabler of the assassin; that Estrin’s every intervention sustained the GPU’s principal agent in Europe. And by the manner of its confirmation—the erasure of the investigators, the fabricated citation, the canonization of the cover-up’s defenders, the amputation of everything after 1940—it testifies to what remains at stake.

What was and is at issue is the political and physical independence of the workers’ movement from the capitalist state. The questions raised by Security and the Fourth International retain their burning contemporary relevance, because the practices it exposed—the penetration of the Socialist Workers Party by the agencies of both Stalinism and imperialism—did not end in 1940, or in 1979, or in 1983, when a federal court, with the support of the SWP’s attorneys, ruled that the GPU’s chief agent could not be made to identify the government’s agents inside the party. Almost 50 years after the Pabloites gathered in London on the Platform of Shame to slander the ICFI’s investigation, its conclusions are recognized as fact even by state-aligned historians who share none of its politics, one of whom now concedes, on the record, that the investigation was “indispensable” and “absolutely right.” Melton and West’s book should be read alongside the investigation it confirms.

Josh Ireland, *The Death of Trotsky: The True Story of the Plot to Kill Stalin’s Greatest Enemy* (New York: Dutton, 2026).

Melton and West, p. 1.

Melton and West, p. 2.

Melton and West, p. 3.

Melton and West, p. 8.

Melton and West, endnotes, chapter 2, n. 1. The publisher is misidentified: as the book’s own bibliography (entry 39) states, *How the GPU Murdered Trotsky* was published by New Park Publications.

Melton and West, endnotes, chapter 2, n. 68.

Melton and West, endnotes, chapter 6, n. 58; chapter 12, n. 11; chapter 20, n. 33; chapter 33, n. 1.

Melton and West, Select Bibliography, entries 23 (*In Defence of Trotskyism*), 39, 48, 49, 58, 86 and 87.

Melton and West, endnotes, Introduction, n. 6; chapter 2, nn. 1, 7, 23, 28, 42, 55, 56, 68; chapter 3, nn. 12, 13, 15; chapter 4, nn. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9; chapter 6, n. 58; chapter 12, nn. 11, 16, 27; chapter 16, nn. 21, 22, 23; chapter 18, n. 24; chapter 20, nn. 31, 33; chapter 22, nn. 2, 4; chapter 24, nn. 14, 17; chapter 29, nn. 6, 8, 9, 10, 11; chapter 33, nn. 1, 2, 9, 30.

Melton and West, endnotes, Introduction, n. 6; chapter 2, nn. 1, 7, 28, 42, 55, 56 (“Ibid.”), 68; chapter 4, nn. 3, 5; chapter 12, nn. 16, 27; Select Bibliography, entry 39. Chapter 4, nn. 3 and 5 attribute the work to “London.”

Melton and West, p. 404.

Melton and West, pp. 181–82.

Melton and West, “Cast of Characters,” s.v. Joseph Hansen, xxi.

Melton and West, p. 404.

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2019/12/31/scfi-d31.html>

<https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/document/swp-us/misc-1/verdict.htm>; <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/09/21/qixz-s21.html>

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/12/10/jopu-d10.html>; <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2015/11/10/weis-n10.html>

Melton and West, “Cast of Characters,” s.v. Robert Sheldon Harte; see also p. 192.

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/09/21/qixz-s21.html>

Melton and West, pp. 42–43.

Melton and West, p. 48.

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2018/08/14/sec1-a14.html>

<https://www.wsws.org/en/special/library/da1b7d2a-85d0-4791-b920-cf2a6516c331.html>

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2018/08/14/sec1-a14.html>;
<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/11/01/2558-n01.html>
<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2018/08/14/sec1-a14.html>;
<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/12/23/zirb-d23.html>
<https://www.wsws.org/en/special/library/fi-14-2/05.html>
<https://www.wsws.org/en/special/library/fi-14-2/05.html>
The Militant, August 5, 1983, p. 13
Melton and West, pp. 47–48.

Melton and West, p. 404; “Cast of Characters,” s.v. Lilia Ginzberg Estrin.

Melton and West, p. 102.

Melton and West, chapter 6, “The Seduction and Betrayal of Sylvia Ageloff”; chapter 29, pp. 293ff.

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/02/06/sylv-f06.html>;
<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/02/06/sylv-f07.html>;
<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/02/08/sylv-f08.html>;
<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/02/09/sylv-f09.html>

Melton and West, chapter 33, pp. 318ff. London’s series is cited in the endnotes to chapter 6 (n. 58), chapter 12 (n. 11), chapter 20 (n. 33), chapter 22 (nn. 2, 4), chapter 24 (nn. 14, 17), chapter 29 (nn. 6, 8–11) and chapter 33 (nn. 1, 2, 9).

Melton and West, p. 319; London is called a “historian” on pp. 319 and 321.

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/09/21/qixz-s21.html>

Melton and West, “Cast of Characters,” s.v. Joseph Hansen.

<https://www.wsws.org/en/special/library/how-the-gpu-murdered-trotsky/00.html>; <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/12/27/kawt-d27.html>

Melton and West, “Why This Book, Why Now, Why These Authors”, ix.

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2015/10/16/meet-s16.html>

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/02/06/sylv-f06.html>

Melton and West, “Why This Book, Why Now, Why These Authors.”

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/05/23/lxnt-m23.html>

Melton and West, “Why This Book, Why Now, Why These Authors.”

Melton and West, endnotes, chapter 16, nn. 21, 22 (“Ibid.”), 23; Select Bibliography, entry 58.

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2019/12/31/scfi-d31.html>

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/11/01/2558-n01.html>;

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Melton and West, p. 243. The same words are also used as the epigraph to chapter 22, p. 237.

Melton and West, endnotes, chapter 22, n. 21.

Trotsky’s Assassin At Large (New York: Labor Publications, 1977) p. 16

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2016/12/08/secu-d08.html>

Melton and West, endnotes, chapter 4, nn. 1, 2, 6, 8, 9; see also chapter 3, nn. 12, 15.

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/05/23/lxnt-m23.html>

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/09/21/qixz-s21.html>;

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/11/01/2558-n01.html>

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Melton and West, p. 30

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2015/11/10/weis-n10.html>

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Melton and West, endnotes, chapter 7, n. 58.

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<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/12/10/jopu-d10.html>

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2015/11/10/weis-n10.html>

Melton and West, Select Bibliography, entry 86; endnotes, chapter 20, n. 31; chapter 33, n. 30.

Melton and West, p. 379.

Melton and West, p. 379 (epigraph, quoting Kronenbitter).

Rita T. Kronenbitter, “Leon Trotsky, Dupe of the NKVD,” *Studies in Intelligence* 16, no. 1 (1972), <https://www.cia.gov/resources/csi/studies-in-intelligence/archives/vol-16-no-1/>

Melton and West, p. 380.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1937/11/hightime.htm>

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1937/09/reiss.htm>

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1940/05/stalin.htm>

[1] Josh Ireland, *The Death of Trotsky: The True Story of the Plot to Kill Stalin’s Greatest Enemy* (New York: Dutton, 2026).

[2] Melton and West, p. 1.

[3] Melton and West, p. 2.

[4] Melton and West, p. 3.

[5] Melton and West, p. 8.

[6] Melton and West, endnotes, chapter 2, n. 1. The publisher is misidentified: as the book’s own bibliography (entry 39) states, *How the GPU Murdered Trotsky* was published by New Park Publications.

[7] Melton and West, endnotes, chapter 2, n. 68.

[8] Melton and West, endnotes, chapter 6, n. 58; chapter 12, n. 11; chapter 20, n. 33; chapter 33, n. 1.

[9] Melton and West, Select Bibliography, entries 23 (*In Defence of Trotskyism*), 39, 48, 49, 58, 86 and 87.

[10] Melton and West, endnotes, Introduction, n. 6; chapter 2, nn. 1, 7, 23, 28, 42, 55, 56, 68; chapter 3, nn. 12, 13, 15; chapter 4, nn. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9; chapter 6, n. 58; chapter 12, nn. 11, 16, 27; chapter 16, nn. 21, 22, 23; chapter 18, n. 24; chapter 20, nn. 31, 33; chapter 22, nn. 2, 4; chapter 24, nn. 14, 17; chapter 29, nn. 6, 8, 9, 10, 11; chapter 33, nn. 1, 2, 9, 30.

[11] Melton and West, endnotes, Introduction, n. 6; chapter 2, nn. 1, 7, 28, 42, 55, 56 (“Ibid.”), 68; chapter 4, nn. 3, 5; chapter 12, nn. 16, 27; Select Bibliography, entry 39. Chapter 4, nn. 3 and 5 attribute the work to “London.”

[12] Melton and West, p. 404.

[13] Melton and West, pp. 181–82.

[14] Melton and West, “Cast of Characters,” s.v. Joseph Hansen, xxi.

[15] Melton and West, p. 404.

[16] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2019/12/31/scfi-d31.html>

[17] <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/document/swpus/misc-1/verdict.htm>; <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/09/21/qixz-s21.html>

[18] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/12/10/jopu-d10.html>;

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2015/11/10/weis-n10.html>

[19] Melton and West, “Cast of Characters,” s.v. Robert Sheldon Harte; see also p. 192.

[20] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/09/21/qixz-s21.html>

[21] Melton and West, pp. 42–43.

[22] Melton and West, p. 48.

[23] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2018/08/14/sec1-a14.html>

[24] <https://www.wsws.org/en/special/library/da1b7d2a-85d0-4791-b920-cf2a6516c331.html>

[25] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2018/08/14/sec1-a14.html>;

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[26] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2018/08/14/sec1-a14.html>;

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/12/23/zirb-d23.html>

[27] <https://www.wsws.org/en/special/library/fi-14-2/05.html>
 [28] <https://www.wsws.org/en/special/library/fi-14-2/05.html>
 [29] *The Militant*, August 5, 1983, p. 13
 [30] Melton and West, pp. 47–48.
 [31] Melton and West, p. 404; “Cast of Characters,” s.v. Lilia Ginzberg Estrin.
 [32] Melton and West, p. 102.
 [33] Melton and West, chapter 6, “The Seduction and Betrayal of Sylvia Ageloff”; chapter 29, pp. 293ff.
 [34] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/02/06/sylv-f06.html>;
<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/02/06/sylv-f07.html>;
<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/02/08/sylv-f08.html>;
<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/02/09/sylv-f09.html>
 [35] Melton and West, chapter 33, pp. 318ff. London’s series is cited in the endnotes to chapter 6 (n. 58), chapter 12 (n. 11), chapter 20 (n. 33), chapter 22 (nn. 2, 4), chapter 24 (nn. 14, 17), chapter 29 (nn. 6, 8–11) and chapter 33 (nn. 1, 2, 9).
 [36] Melton and West, p. 319; London is called a “historian” on pp. 319 and 321.
 [37] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/09/21/qixz-s21.html>
 [38] Melton and West, “Cast of Characters,” s.v. Joseph Hansen.
 [39] <https://www.wsws.org/en/special/library/how-the-gpu-murdered-trotsky/00.html>; <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/12/27/kawt-d27.html>
 [40] Melton and West, “Why This Book, Why Now, Why These Authors”, ix.
 [41] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2015/10/16/meet-s16.html>
 [42] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/02/06/sylv-f06.html>
 [43] Melton and West, “Why This Book, Why Now, Why These Authors.”
 [44] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/05/23/lxnt-m23.html>
 [45] Melton and West, “Why This Book, Why Now, Why These Authors.”
 [46] Melton and West, endnotes, chapter 16, nn. 21, 22 (“Ibid.”), 23; Select Bibliography, entry 58.
 [47] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2019/12/31/scfi-d31.html>
 [48] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/11/01/2558-n01.html>;
<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/02/09/sylv-f09.html>
 [49] Melton and West, p. 243. The same words are also used as the epigraph to chapter 22, p. 237.
 [50] Melton and West, endnotes, chapter 22, n. 21.
 [51] *Trotsky’s Assassin At Large* (New York: Labor Publications, 1977) p. 16
 [52] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2016/12/08/secu-d08.html>
 [53] Melton and West, endnotes, chapter 4, nn. 1, 2, 6, 8, 9; see also chapter 3, nn. 12, 15.
 [54] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/05/23/lxnt-m23.html>
 [55] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/09/21/qixz-s21.html>;
<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/11/01/2558-n01.html>
 [56] <https://www.wsws.org/en/special/library/da1b7d2a-85d0-4791-b920-cf2a6516c331.html>
 [57] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/11/06/quol-n06.html>;
<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2022/10/17/hene-o17.html>
 [58] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/11/25/bsbh-n25.html>
 [59] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/11/11/lodg-n11.html>
 [60] Melton and West, p. 30
 [61] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2015/11/10/weis-n10.html>
 [62] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2015/11/10/weis-n10.html>
 [63] Melton and West, endnotes, chapter 7, n. 58.
 [64] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2015/11/10/weis-n10.html>
 [65] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2015/11/10/weis-n10.html>
 [66] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2015/11/10/weis-n10.html>;

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/12/10/jopu-d10.html>
 [67] <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2015/11/10/weis-n10.html>
 [68] Melton and West, Select Bibliography, entry 86; endnotes, chapter 20, n. 31; chapter 33, n. 30.
 [69] Melton and West, p. 379.
 [70] Melton and West, p. 379 (epigraph, quoting Kronenbitter).
 [71] Rita T. Kronenbitter, “Leon Trotsky, Dupe of the NKVD,” *Studies in Intelligence* 16, no. 1 (1972), <https://www.cia.gov/resources/csi/studies-in-intelligence/archives/vol-16-no-1/>
 [72] Melton and West, p. 380.
 [73] <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1937/11/hightime.htm>
 [74] <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1937/09/reiss.htm>
 [75] <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1940/05/stalin.htm>



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