

# An “Exemplary” Comrade: The Socialist Workers Party’s 40-year-long cover-up of Stalinist spy Sylvia Callen: Part one

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*In May 1947 the Socialist Workers Party received information that Sylvia Callen, the personal secretary of long-time party leader James P. Cannon, was an agent of the Soviet secret police, the GPU. It quickly became clear that Callen had concealed critical personal information about her Stalinist background when she joined the SWP in 1938. For nearly nine years Callen had high-level and unrestricted access to the party’s most sensitive information. However, rather than exposing Callen’s murderous role as a spy within the Trotskyist movement, the Socialist Workers Party launched a cover-up that lasted for nearly 40 years. What follows is a historical account of the cover-up and its exposure by the International Committee of the Fourth International.*

## PART ONE

On Saturday, March 8, 1947, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) ran a banner headline in its publication, the *Militant*, which read:

“Stalin’s guilt in Trotsky murder bared by ex-Daily Worker editor: Budenz discloses details of how 1940 assassination was prepared, implicates leaders of Communist Party in GPU conspiracy.” [1]

The article detailed revelations from former American Stalinist leader Louis Budenz’s forthcoming book *This Is My Story*. The SWP had acquired an advanced copy and made its contents known for the first time.

*This Is My Story* vindicated the Fourth International’s insistence that the assassination of Trotsky had been ordered by Stalin and carried out by the GPU, the secret police of the Stalinist regime in the USSR.

The lead article on March 8 in the *Militant*, written by John G. Wright, explained, “As an eyewitness and direct participant, Budenz, who served the Kremlin loyally for ten years, now supplies conclusive evidence that top operators of Stalin’s secret police worked for years on American soil to prepare for the murder of Trotsky.” [2]

Less than seven years had passed since a Stalinist agent, using the false name Frank Jacson, murdered Leon Trotsky in Coyoacan, Mexico City, and it was only a decade since the peak of the mass exterminations during the Great Terror of 1936–39 within the Soviet Union.

Aside from Trotsky’s assassin, who eventually was identified as Ramon Mercader del Rio, while serving a 20-year murder sentence in a Mexican prison, nobody had been punished or jailed for the crimes of the GPU. Budenz’s book exposed the conspiracy behind Trotsky’s murder. It not only confirmed that the assassination was ordered in Moscow. Budenz also named leaders and members of the American Communist Party as accomplices.

Budenz revealed that in December 1936, a GPU agent asked to meet with him secretly in a nondescript restaurant on East 14th Street.

“It was rather early in my Party career that I was summoned to meet members of the Soviet secret police working on American soil,” he wrote. [3] The agent, who spoke with a heavy Russian accent, described himself

as “Richards.” The two sat in a corner, the clatter of dishes from the dinner crowd in the background. “As we ate together, Richards quietly told me his purpose in seeing me. His commission was to investigate the condition of the Social Democrats, and to determine who among them and what Trotskyites and ‘fascists’ were making organized efforts to enter the Soviet Union.” [4]

Just four months earlier, in August 1936, the first Moscow Show Trial had concluded, resulting in the execution of 16 defendants, including Old Bolsheviks Grigory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev, for engaging in a “Trotskyite conspiracy.” During the ensuing campaign of mass murder to terrorize and destroy opposition to the Stalinist regime, hundreds of thousands were executed or thrown into labor camps. The mere accusation of sympathy for Trotskyism meant a death sentence.

When the topic of discussion turned to the August trial, Budenz expressed his support. The GPU was now preparing purges on an international scale.

As the meeting between Budenz and “Richards” took place, Trotsky was aboard a tanker headed from Norway to Mexico, fleeing from a continent comprised of governments who had rejected his appeals for asylum. With Trotsky taking up residence in Mexico, the GPU was preparing its North American counterparts to carry out his assassination.

After this meeting, Budenz began his assignment:

“Where did I fit into an enterprise for the protection of the Soviet Union from plotters? I was readily told. I was to collect all the data I had on enemies of the Soviet Union within the Left or labor ranks, and specifically the Trotskyites. Their names were to be given and everything else about them that might be pertinent to this inquiry.”

The GPU knew it was the SWP—the leading section of the Fourth International—that was responsible for ensuring Trotsky’s security in Mexico. As a result, Budenz wrote, “particular attention was to be paid those who did much traveling, especially abroad.” [5]

Budenz exposed CP leaders Earl Browder and Jack Stachel as personally supervising the infiltration campaign. With their collaboration, Budenz was able “to move back and forth across Manhattan” meeting GPU agents and delivering information on the SWP. [6]

In 1937, Budenz began working with an agent named “Roberts,” a.k.a. Dr. Gregory Rabinowitz, a leader of the American Stalinist spy ring. Rabinowitz had been tasked with weaving a net of agents to entrap Trotsky, and Budenz was to help plot the most intimate details. Rabinowitz asked Budenz, “Can you tell me where the Trotskyites here get their mail from Trotsky in Mexico City?” [7] Budenz obliged, mining

his sources for information and helping the GPU get to those close to Trotsky, always looking for information regarding the SWP's international correspondence.

"Photographs, too, came into [Roberts-Rabinowitz's] field of inquiry," Budenz wrote.

"He began to bring me a number, one after another, and ask, 'Do you know this man? Or that?' For the most part they seemed to be men and women seeking Soviet visas. Then he inquired about certain names on lists, which he said were 'Trotskyite couriers.' One of these was an inconspicuous newspaperman working in and out of China, who later, I believe, became associated with Reuters. Another was Sylvia Ageloff, whose name became widely known as the woman who brought Leon Trotsky's assassin, 'Frank Jacson,' into Mexico." [8]

Budenz and the GPU built a network of agents to acquire information about the Trotskyist movement and the SWP's communications with Trotsky. Rabinowitz would propose candidates and Budenz would supply information on them, providing the GPU with his appraisal of their political trustworthiness and abilities for espionage.

"Generally, he [Rabinowitz] asked me first about their Party records and then how they would fit into further underground work among the Trotskyites or other groups," Budenz wrote. "After getting the individual's record, my job was to size him or her up according to their attitudes and associations (if I knew them in the past)." [9]

The central purpose of the infiltration was to kill Trotsky. To this end, Budenz exposed how he helped put the GPU in touch with Ruby Weil, who orchestrated the meeting between her friend Sylvia Ageloff, a member of the SWP, and Mercader, Trotsky's future killer.

Rabinowitz asked Budenz "that I bring Miss Y [later identified as Ruby Weil], a young woman who he had learned was a friend of Sylvia Ageloff," to a meeting at a Chicago hotel. [10] Weil was later to work with Paris-based GPU agent Mark Zborowski, party name "Etienne," to give Mercader access to Trotsky's household in Mexico City through Ageloff. Zborowski was, at the time, a member of the Fourth International.

The rendezvous between Mercader and Ageloff took place in Paris in 1938. Beginning in 1939, the two traveled to Mexico City together, where Ageloff introduced Mercader, the man she knew as Frank Jacson, into Trotsky's household. [11] The Stalinist ring around Trotsky was growing tighter, and the stage for his death was being set.

### **SWP demands grand jury indict Stalinist spies and CP leaders**

In response to the Budenz revelations, the SWP immediately began to publish the new information as widely as possible, demanding an investigation into the Stalinists' role in infiltrating the Trotskyist movement and assassinating its founder and leader.

All this was reported in the pages of the *Militant*. [12] The front page article of March 8, 1947 explained: "Sinister and secret details connected with the assassination of Leon Trotsky by Stalin's hired killer in Mexico City in August 1940 have been disclosed by Louis F. Budenz." [13]

The *Militant* said Budenz's book "now supplies conclusive evidence that top operators of Stalin's secret police worked for years on American soil to prepare the murder of Trotsky" and that "American Stalinists,

including Budenz himself, helped pave the way for the assassin 'Frank Jacson' to worm his way into Trotsky's home." [14]

The *Militant* detailed how the book described Budenz meeting "with the GPU chieftain in charge of 'Anti-Trotskyist' activities," an agent known as "Richards." Budenz "was consulted on the selection of spies to penetrate the Trotskyist ranks" and "contacted GPU chieftains at least once a week. No piece of information was deemed too unimportant." [15]

The article continued: "Stalin's murder machine was particularly eager to collect every scrap of information concerning Trotskyists who travelled abroad. They were in search of some individual whom they could enmesh in Europe in their murder plot." Budenz's book showed how the Stalinists "had laid all the preliminary groundwork in the United States in 1937 for the assassination of Leon Trotsky in Mexico in 1940." [16]

The *Militant* proclaimed, "the revelations of Budenz fill in the missing threads in the fabric of evidence that places the responsibility for the murder of Leon Trotsky on the shoulders of Joseph Stalin." [17]

Based on Budenz's account of GPU infiltration and the plot to kill Trotsky, the SWP launched a public campaign to expose the GPU and the role of the American Communist Party. The SWP immediately put forward the demand that a grand jury subpoena key Stalinists so those responsible for orchestrating the infiltration of the Trotskyist movement would be forced to testify about the penetration of the Trotskyist movement, and called for the exposure of those agents remaining in the movement.

The revelations and demands for an investigation had an immense political impact among broader circles of the political left, which the SWP fought to mobilize in a commission to demand a grand jury to investigate the role of the GPU and the Communist Party USA in Trotsky's death.

On March 17, 1947, an SWP-led coalition that included Socialist Party leader Norman Thomas, presented a petition to the district attorney in Manhattan demanding the convocation of a grand jury. The SWP mobilized a number of leading political and intellectual figures, including the author James T. Farrell and academics John Dewey and Sidney Hook, who reflected popular anger over the news of the Stalinist plot and gave the demand for a grand jury a broad popular appeal that the state could not ignore.

On March 22, The *Militant's* lead headline read, "Ask grand jury to investigate Trotsky's murder—delegation demands probe of Stalin's agent who plotted assassination in New York City." [18]

The *Militant* reported the delegation "held a 45 minute meeting with Jacob Grumet, assistant District Attorney, to demand action on the sensational revelations made by Louis F. Budenz in his recently published book, *This is My Story*. In his autobiography, the former *Daily Worker* editor and Communist Party national committee member, testifies from personal knowledge that GPU agents, aided by American Communist Party leaders, plotted their moves here which ended in the murder of Trotsky in Mexico City in 1940. The delegation handed the District Attorney a statement signed by scores of prominent citizens." [19]

The statement delivered to the assistant District Attorney on March 17, 1947 read, in part:

"Earl Browder, Jack Stachel, Budenz himself, and all other Communist Party leaders, past or present, who are known to have been involved in the activities of the Soviet secret police in our community, or who are declared to have had knowledge of such activities should be subjected to official examination and such

judicial action as the facts may warrant.

“Budenz adds new and hitherto missing links to the chain of evidence presented during Jacson’s trial in Mexico, which showed him to be a Soviet police agent.” [20]

The *Militant* reported that Norman Thomas also asked the district attorney for an investigation into other murders believed to have been carried out in New York City by the Stalinists, including the 1937 disappearance of Juliet Stuart Poyntz, a prominent member of the Communist Party suspected of opposing the Stalinist terror, and anarchist leader Carlo Tresca, gunned down in 1943.

Thomas said:

“There are many others. The so-called ‘suicide’ of [Soviet defector Walter] Krivitsky in Washington—a phony if there ever was one! There is the murder of [defector] Ignace Reiss in Switzerland; the series of murders of Trotsky’s secretaries and members of his family. We think the situation is so grave that immediate action is imperative to halt these political murders.” [21]

The significance of Budenz’s revelations and the weight of his word as an accomplice compelled the District Attorney’s office to acknowledge “that the Budenz book could ‘provide many leads,’” the *Militant* wrote. [22]

The SWP expanded its campaign with the publication on May 3, 1947 of an article by Trotsky’s widow Natalia Sedova titled, “Stalin’s guilt—Budenz book supplies link to GPU murder of Trotsky.” [23]

Sedova wrote:

“Everything we said in connection with the violent death of L.D. Trotsky is today being wholly confirmed by the confessions of Louis Budenz, a former leader of the American ‘Communist’ Stalinist Party, in his book *This Is My Story* published in March of this year.” She added, “The confessions of Louis Budenz throw into the limelight the entire activity of the secret Stalinist ‘Apparatus’ which has usurped power and which acts with bloody arbitrariness.”

Sedova continued:

“The participation of the leaders of the ‘Communist’ party of the US in the plot against Trotsky, attested to by Louis Budenz, provides sufficient grounds to bring before the court, Budenz himself, together with Browder and Stachel, and to place them in the hands of the Mexican judicial authorities.” [24]

Within weeks of publishing Budenz’s revelations, the SWP campaign for a grand jury compelled the DA to call Budenz to testify. For the first time since Trotsky’s assassination, the SWP had caused a person with intimate knowledge of how the GPU murdered Trotsky to appear under oath in an American courtroom. The opportunity to expose the Stalinists’ crimes and shed light on their infiltration of the Trotskyist movement had never been closer.

But just as a real investigation appeared likely, an event occurred that led the SWP to abort its campaign, denounce Budenz as a liar and abandon further efforts to expose Stalinist agents inside the Trotskyist

movement.

### **A visit from Max Shachtman and Albert Glotzer**

It had been seven years since Max Shachtman and Albert Glotzer split from the SWP to found the Workers Party when the two walked in to National Secretary James P. Cannon’s office at 116 University Place, New York, in May 1947. Despite their political differences with the SWP, both men had long histories in the Trotskyist movement, and they held a principled position toward sharing information related to questions of political security.

Shachtman and Glotzer brought shattering news. They told Cannon that they had received reliable information that implicated his personal secretary, Sylvia Callen, whose party name was Caldwell, as a GPU agent.

Shachtman and Glotzer affirmed that the source was reliable and had provided them with correct information in the past. The source informed Shachtman and Glotzer that the Stalinists had moved Callen from Chicago to New York in 1939 for the purposes of infiltrating Cannon’s office. Their source said Sylvia had been in a relationship with a young Stalinist from a Stalinist family whose father was a doctor.

### **The 1947 Control Commission**

Callen was, in the language of the day, Cannon’s “Girl Friday.” She handled all of his political and personal affairs. She organized Cannon’s schedule, had access to all party records, finances and international correspondence, and took dictation of his letters, memoranda and political reports. If Callen were an agent, it meant the security of the SWP and the Fourth International had been severely compromised by the GPU. All important information that crossed Cannon’s desk had been read by the GPU and transmitted to the Kremlin, including details of Trotsky’s security in Coyoacan.

Alongside the evidence of Callen’s role, Shachtman and Glotzer also informed Cannon that their source stated there was an FBI agent in the party leadership.

On May 26, 1947, Cannon convened a meeting of the Control Commission, the party organization responsible for internal investigations. The ICFI has accessed the minutes of the May 26, 1947 and subsequent commission meetings in the Hoover Institute at Stanford University, and publishes them here for the first time:

Meeting of Control Commission, May 26, 1947.

Report by Martin [Cannon]:

For several years the WP has been sending us reports that they have information which would indicate that the FBI had an agent in our party, high in the leadership. They claimed that their source of information had proven correct in several instances and that they believed this source was reliable.

Recently Shachtman and Gould [Glotzer] talked with Cannon and told him that the same source has informed them as follows:

The Stalinists have a woman in the SWP and that her name is S.

She came from Chicago in 1939 and that she worked there in a doctor’s office.

She has or had a boy friend whose name is Irving.

Gould insisted that she came from the YCL.

This information pointed to Comrade S.

MOTION: That the case be thoroughly investigated by the Control Commission.

That we have a session with S. to get her biographical story and then call in Shachtman and Gould.

Carried.

First meeting with S. set for Thurs. evening May 29, 1947.

Three days later, on May 29, Callen appeared before the Commission. The facts relating to her background largely substantiated the information provided by Shachtman and Glotzer. It was quickly established that Callen had concealed critical aspects of her personal and political background and associations, including the fact that she was married and that her husband, Zalmond Franklin, was a leading Stalinist from a prominent Communist Party family in Wisconsin.

The May 29 meeting minutes read as follows:

Case of Comrade S.  
May 29, 1947.

In response to questions put to her by members of the Secretariat and Control Commission in combined session, the following biographical sketch was given:

My father's name is John Callen. He has been a salesman for many years. Neither he nor any other member of my family entertain or ever entertained any political views other than the average citizen.

I myself did not know that there was such a thing as a radical movement until I was about 19, at college. I lived in Milwaukee until about 1932. I went to Madison, Wisc. to attend the University of Wisconsin. I met Zalmond Franklin and we got married in February 1935. We were together on and off for about a year. I graduated June 1935 and left school. Franklin remained at school. After graduating I looked for work and finally found a job in a Milwaukee drug store and worked there for a while as sales clerk.

In the Fall of 1935 or Spring of 1936 I went to Chicago to live with my folks. There I entered the Chicago University to study social service. I went to school there for four quarters, working one summer for the Jewish Social Service outfit there, and then went to work for the Chicago Relief Administration where I worked until I came to New York.

In the summer of 1937 I joined a YPSL [Young Peoples' Socialist League—the youth movement of the Socialist Party, within which the SWP conducted its activity at the time] circle in Chicago.

I came to New York in May 1938 to go to work for the Hebrew Association for the Deaf. I worked part time there and helped out in the National Office of the SWP in spare time. In December 1939 [here there is a strike out over the "9" and a line to a margin correction which reads "1938"] I was asked to take a full-time job in the SWP National Office as the office secretary was leaving to take a job in industry.

On direct questioning of Cannon, the following answers were given:

My first contact with radicalism was at Wisconsin University where there was a group of the National Students' League. My husband joined the League, 1935 semester, and I joined too just because he did. But I really didn't know what it was all about. I don't know whether the YCL [Young Communist League—the youth movement of the Stalinist Communist Party] had a fraction there at the time, but there was a radical group, bohemian types, of which my husband was one, and which was considered the "Communists" on the campus. I never knew whether my husband had any communist affiliations, but knew he was radical in his views and he may have been a member. I do know that his parents were either communists in ideology or just on the fringe of the Communist Party. They once gave a house party for the Friends of the Soviet Union.

Some years ago I heard that my former husband had been in Spain during the revolutionary days there. So I imagine he must have

become a YCLer after our separation. Or he may very likely have been one before. I did not know enough then to be able to detect that and he never trusted me with any information about his activities.

"Did you ever belong to the YCL?"

No, never. I knew of the existence of such an organization but reacted against it emotionally because of the Bohemian character of the people around my husband who were considered 'communists'. But I did not really understand what communism was.

"How did you come to join the YPSL? Any member of your family interested in socialism?"

No, none of my family ever had or have now any radical views. I came to join the YPSL chiefly, I guess, because I was so lonely. I did not fit in with the friends of my family and I had no circle of my own. At the University in Madison, I got my first contact with radicalism and in a vague way I got to feel that socialism is a good thing. I heard Norman Thomas speak at the Socialist Club of the University of Chicago and he made a deep impression on me. I wanted to know more about socialism, so in my loneliness, I consulted the Chicago telephone directory for the address of some socialist organization, and found [sic] the Socialist Bookstore.

At the time I was working as a social worker in Chicago. The work I was doing, by the way, did not help me any. The patronizing attitude toward the poor was very distasteful to me. Well, so I went to the Socialist Party bookstore for some of their literature. There I met Lydia Beidel. She told me about the Young People's Socialist League in my neighborhood and invited me to attend. I went. They met at Belle's house. There I met a number of people. They seemed so different from the people I had known and made me feel so at home that I returned to a number of meetings and then joined the Circle. They were different from the other type of radicals I had known at college and I liked them as people. In the summer of 1937 I joined the YPSL circle on the North Side, Chicago.

Paul Picquet was the organizer of this circle. Most of the members of this circle were already Trotskyists. I came under their influence.

Several months after the Founding Convention of the Socialist Workers Party. [sic] I joined the party. The branch I joined had in it Goldman, Belle, Helen Judd, Shirley S, Irving Bern and all the other Landaus.

When I left for New York I was transferred. Here I was attached to the Village branch which met at Luttinger's. In this branch was Rose Karsner, Frieda Moore, Billie Ramloff.

"Did you ever work for a doctor in Chicago or Milwaukee?"

No, never. The only doctor I knew in those days was my husband's father. But I never worked for any doctor.

"Did you ever have a boy friend by the name of Irving?"

I may have casually known some student by that name, though I don't recall any. But I never had any close friend by that name.

Callen admitted that she had been a member of the Stalinist-aligned National Student League and that her husband, Zalmond Franklin, fought as a Stalinist in the Spanish Civil War and came from a Stalinist family. Until then, after eight years working in the national office, the SWP leaders had not known that Callen was married, let alone to a Stalinist. This was also the first time the party learned of her involvement with the Stalinist National Student League. But the SWP was grasping at straws when it claimed that Shachtman and Glotzer's reference to Callen's boyfriend "Irving" undercut the source's assertions. Every other detail

substantiated the source as well as Budenz's revelations.

The facts which Callen now revealed left no doubt that she had lied about her close connections with the Communist Party. But Zalmond Franklin was not merely a rank-and-file CP member or an innocent YCLer. Information that was readily available when the Control Commission convened showed Callen's husband was a prominent public representative of the Communist Party and a member of a leading Stalinist family.

Zalmond David Franklin (1909–1958), and his father, Samuel Nathan Franklin (1882–1958), both served in the Spanish Civil War. Samuel Franklin was a doctor who was elected County Coroner in Milwaukee in 1918 as a member of the Socialist Party. Long active in politics, Samuel Franklin led the Milwaukee Medical Bureau of the Stalinist-led North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy during the civil war. [25]

According to ship travel log records, the elder Franklin was in Spain with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade as a medical adviser from July 1937 to February 1938. [26] Callen herself admitted on May 29 that her husband's father was a doctor.

Zalmond Franklin was the second oldest of Samuel Franklin's three children. A University of Wisconsin bacteriology student, he served as an agent of the GPU in Spain from July 1937 to March 1938. His passport lists a Chicago address. [27] An article titled "Zalmond Franklin, 'Somewhere in Spain'" in the October 11, 1937 edition of the *Wisconsin State Journal* makes reference to the young Stalinist:

"Zalmond Franklin, former University of Wisconsin student, is with his father, Dr. Samuel N. Franklin, Milwaukee, in an American base hospital 'somewhere in Spain.' Zalmond quit his bacteriology studies here early this year to go to Spain, and was followed by his father, head of the Milwaukee medical bureau of the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy." [28]

In an article published in the *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle* on May 6, 1938, Zalmond Franklin was referred to as a well-known public speaker on behalf of the Stalinists and their crimes in Spain. The *Chronicle* article reads:

"Zalmond Franklin, graduate student of bacteriology, left the U. of Wis. Last June to serve the cause of democracy in republican Spain. He was in charge of all laboratory work in the four American hospitals in Spain. He left Spain this February, arriving in New York a month ago.

"At present he is touring the [middle] west telling of the terrific struggle in Spain and of his own unusual experiences. He will speak at the Jewish Center, 1025 N. Milwaukee street, this Saturday, May 7, at 8 p.m." [29]

When Callen admitted to hiding her marriage to this Stalinist, the SWP had enough information to know she was a spy. All the SWP had to do was investigate the Franklin family by picking up the telephone and calling the Milwaukee branch or by inquiring with Harry Milton, an SWP member who fought in Spain with the Workers Party of Marxist Unity (POUM) while the Franklins were also present. Readily available reports in the local newspapers would also have shown the Franklins' roles as high-profile Communist Party figures. Callen provided the SWP with information that left no doubt about who she really was.

But when the party control commission met for the last time a week

later on June 5, 1947, it covered up the evidence of Callen's marriage to Zalmond Franklin. A stenographic report of the meeting, titled "Case of Comrade S.," is published in full:

Case of Comrade S.

June 5, 1947.

Joint meeting of Control Comm. and Secretariat.

PURPOSE of meeting: To hear a report from WP members about rumors concerning comrade S which came to their attention.

Report by Shachtman: "About one, two or three weeks after Budenz's book, THIS IS MY STORY came out, a reliable friend of ours came and told me that an FBI agent called on him to get some information. In the course of the conversation the FBI man told our friend Jones that the Stalinists have an agent in the SWP. He then asked if Jones knew a certain "S" in the SWP who came from Chicago in 1939, got a job in the office of the SWP and then became private secretary to Cannon. In Chicago she worked for a doctor. She had a Stalinist boy friend by the name of Irving."

The WP comrades were then told of "S"'s biographical sketch as it was given to us by her.

Comrade G of the WP then told of the first time he met "S" at a membership meeting in Chicago in the NW side, about 1937.

The WP members assured us they had not talked to anyone about the matter and would not do so. They agreed there was nothing in the information they had except the statement of an FBI man, but felt duty-bound to report the matter to us.

Cannon pointed out that the only facts upon which the FBI man based the conclusion that she is a Stalinist agent in the SWP were:

- 1 - That comrade S came to New York from Chicago in 1939.
- 2 - That she had worked for a doctor in Chicago
- 3 - That she got a job as stenographer in the office of the SWP and later became Cannon's private secretary.
- 4 - That she had or has a boy friend named Irving.

Discussion followed and the general consensus of opinion was that the above points did not constitute any facts upon which to base any credence in the rumor or further action.

After the WP members left the discussion was continued and the following motion was made and carried:

MOTION: That there is no basis for suspicion of comrade S in the statements of the FBI man and that we so notify comrade S.

That we make no mention of the case to anyone and ask the WP comrades not to speak of it either.

That we watch for evidence of any gossip about this matter and in the event that such gossip develops we act promptly according to the circumstances dictated by the new developments.

Rose Karsner  
Control Commission

The SWP response was a dishonest cover-up. Shachtman and Glotzer had provided the Control Commission with clear and actionable facts. The publicly available information about the Franklin family's role as public advocates for Stalinism proved definitively that Sylvia Callen had lied about her ties to the Communist Party.

The SWP would have been entirely within their rights to demand a grand jury investigation into Callen's role just as they had demanded with Louis Budenz. On June 5, 1947, the *same day* of the second SWP Control Commission meeting, Budenz finally appeared before a grand jury in New York. The SWP had been in regular contact with the Manhattan District Attorney whom they had met to deliver petitions demanding a grand jury indictment. Now, the SWP had proof that the GPU had

infiltrated the party leadership with an agent who had access to high-level internal material. This was a major breakthrough in the case to expose GPU infiltration of the Trotskyist movement.

But the SWP did nothing to investigate Callen's role. They should have expelled Callen for lying and concealing her background. They should have made this information public, adding to the Budenz revelations and the hemorrhaging of information relating to the GPU's infiltration of the SWP and its role in orchestrating the assassination of Leon Trotsky. Instead, they let her go and passed a motion "that we make no mention of the case to anyone and ask the WP comrades [Shachtman and Glotzer] not to speak of it either." The control commission resolved, "in the event that such gossip develops we act promptly according to the circumstances dictated by the new developments." Cannon's wife and Callen's good friend, Rose Karsner, was the sole signatory on the June 5 stenographic report.

By withholding this crucial information, the SWP was obstructing the very investigation they had demanded in the first place.

Budenz's exposure of Callen was, without question, a devastating political and personal blow to Cannon. He would have immediately recognized the political implications of Callen's treachery. The security of the SWP had been fatally compromised. Callen had access to the party's documents, records, and international correspondence. Cannon was confronted with a nightmare that was all too real. Nevertheless, Cannon and the Control Commission had an inescapable political obligation to get to the truth of the matter. Instead, acting in a manner for which there could be no justification, they decided to organize a cover-up of Callen's role as a Stalinist spy.

Callen left the movement immediately after the SWP control commission and moved out of New York. Her sudden disappearance was neither reported nor explained to the membership. Moreover, Budenz's appearance before the grand jury was barely noted in the *Militant*; the SWP soon dropped its coverage of the Budenz revelations altogether.

*To be continued*

Notes:

[1] The *Militant*, March 8, 1947. Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/themilitant/1947/v11n10-mar-08-1947.pdf>.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Budenz, Louis, *This Is My Story*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1947), p. 244.

[4] Ibid., p. 245.

[5] Ibid., pp. 245–46.

[6] Ibid., pp. 246.

[7] Ibid., p. 257.

[8] Ibid., pp. 258.

[9] Ibid., p. 259.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., p. 262.

[12] The *Militant*, March 8, 1947. Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/themilitant/1947/v11n10-mar-08-1947.pdf>.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] The *Militant*, March 22, 1947. Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/themilitant/1947/v11n12-mar-22-1947.pdf>.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] The *Militant*, May 3, 1947. Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/themilitant/1947/v11n18-may-03-1947.pdf>.

[24] Ibid. [25] "Samuel Nathan Franklin," Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archive, available at: <http://www.alba-valb.org/volunteers/samuel-n-franklin>

[26] Ibid.

[27] "Zalmond David Franklin," Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archive, available at: <http://www.alba-valb.org/volunteers/zalmond-david-franklin>

[28] "Zalmond Franklin, 'Somewhere in Spain,'" October 11, 1937, *Wisconsin State Journal*, p. 2.

[29] "Experiences in Spanish War to Be Recounted," May 6, 1958, *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*.

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