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[This letter was sent to all of our sponsors, Natalie]
Joseph Hansen Publishing Fund

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George Novack

February 17, 1979

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We want to thank you for being a sponsor of the Joseph Hansen Publishing Fund.

Efforts to obtain contributions to the Fund are being made all around the world. A meeting to launch the Fund in Canada was held February 16, and the Fund is being organized in Britain, Colombia, France, Mexico, Sweden, and other countries, through many of the sponsors.

Your help in soliciting donations to the Fund is needed. Enclosed is the material being used in this effort. If you wish to receive more material for distribution, please let us know. Or, if you prefer, we can send material directly to the potential contributors list that you send us.

As of today more than \$14,000 has been pledged to the Fund. As the accompanying literature explains, plans are already under way to edit and publish a collection of Hansen's writings on problems of revolutionary strategy for Latin America.

We hope you will continue to help us in this project.

In Solidarity,



Reba Hansen
Treasurer



George Novack
Chairperson

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(list in formation)

February 6, 1979

Dear Friend,

We invite you to join us in establishing the Joseph Hansen Publishing Fund. The purpose of this fund is to raise \$20,000 by March 31 to publish the uncollected writings and speeches of Joseph Hansen, veteran leader of the Fourth International, of the Socialist Workers Party, and editor of Intercontinental Press/Inprecor from 1963 to 1979.

As you can see, a number of prominent initial sponsors have already lent their support to this effort which was initiated by Reba Hanseh and the contributing editors of Intercontinental Press/Inprecor -- Pierre Frank, Livio Maitan, Ernest Mandel, and George Novack.

Hansen edited Intercontinental Press/Inprecor for 16 years in addition to his other activities. He wrote extensively on a wide range of topics, both theoretical and polemical. His subject matter ranged from the overturn of capitalism in Eastern Europe following World War II, to the Cuban revolution, and the revolutionary strategy for the world Trotskyist movement. He wrote on such varied subjects as the Malthus theory of population explosion, the American forms of fascism, whether a new world war is inevitable, and the place of scientific freedom in the Soviet Union.

The fund was well launched at a memorial meeting of nearly 600 people in New York City on January 28. At that event \$8,311 was contributed and pledged. Meetings to build the fund are being held in a number of cities in the United States and contributions are also being solicited from Hansen's friends in other countries.

As a start, plans are already under way to edit and publish a collection of Hansen's writings on problems of revolutionary strategy for Latin America.

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Enclosed is an article by George Novack from Inter-continental Press/Inprecor about Joe's life and works.

We hope you will consider making a contribution to this project. Checks can be made out to "Joseph Hansen Publishing Fund" and mailed to Joseph Hansen Publishing Fund, 14 Charles Lane, New York, N.Y. 10014.



Reba Hansen
Treasurer

In Solidarity,



George Novack
Chairperson

Joseph Hansen, 1910-1979

By George Novack

Joseph Hansen, veteran leader of the Fourth International and Socialist Workers Party and editor of *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor* since its foundation, died on January 18 in New York City at the age of sixty-eight. Although he bore a sizable load of journalistic and organizational responsibilities up to the end, he had suffered from diabetes for some years and succumbed in a few days from infectious complications.

* * *

When Evelyn Reed and I were driving cross-country from Los Angeles to New York in 1965, we stopped at Richfield, a small town in Utah, attracted by a cowboy rodeo being staged that night. Some months later, when I told Joe Hansen how much we had enjoyed the spectacle of the Old West, known only from movies and TV, he exclaimed, "Why, that's my hometown!"

Joe was born June 16, 1910. He was the oldest of fifteen children in a poor working-class family and became the only one to go to college.

The rugged life of this semirural territory in which he grew up made a lasting mark on his makeup. He had a sturdy physique and felt thoroughly at home in wilderness ways. He was a crack shot, a skill that was handy when he later served as a guard in the Trotsky household. He and his companion, Reba, whom he married in 1931, were most happy when they could backpack through the mountains and woods of their native state on their vacations, breathing in the pure air and hunting for unusual rock specimens.

How did this young fellow from a backwoods Mormon community become an outstanding Marxist, respected the world over as a political strategist and theoretician of the Trotskyist movement? From adolescence, he once told me, he had been intrigued by the personalities and promise of the Russian Revolution, which took a stand for the poor against the rich.

However, it was the campus of the University of Utah in Salt Lake City that provided the springboard for his political career. Just as it had affected thousands of other students of that generation, the Great Depression turned his thoughts in an anticapitalist direction.

There fortunately he met up with Earle Birney, a professor who had broken with Stalinism in 1933 and started a branch of the Communist Left Opposition. Birney, who later became one of Canada's most prominent poets and literary critics, convinced him of the necessity for a socialist revolution and the correctness of the ideas

Joseph Hansen Publishing Fund Announced

Reba Hansen and the contributing editors of *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*—Pierre Frank, Livio Maitan, Ernest Mandel, and George Novack—have announced plans for the formation of a special fund to raise \$20,000 to make possible the publication of some of Joseph Hansen's previously uncollected works.

The aim is to obtain this sum by March 31, so as to begin without delay the work of selecting and preparing material for the first volume.

Reba Hansen, Joseph Hansen's companion and collaborator for forty-eight years, will serve as treasurer of the fund. George Novack, who had worked closely with Hansen in literary projects for four decades, will serve as chairman.

Those who have already joined the initial list of sponsors for the project include: Tariq Ali, Robin Blackburn, Pierre Broué, Pierre Frank, Al Hansen, Quentin Hoare, Pierre Lambert, Livio Maitan, Ernest Mandel, Ray Sparrow, Vsevolod Volkof, and Mary-Alice Waters.

In addition to his lifelong editorial responsibilities, including sixteen years as editor of this magazine, Hansen wrote extensively on a wide range of topics, both theoretical and polemical.

Among his most valued contributions were his writings on the overturn of capitalism in Eastern Europe following World War II, the Cuban revolution, revolutionary strategy for the world

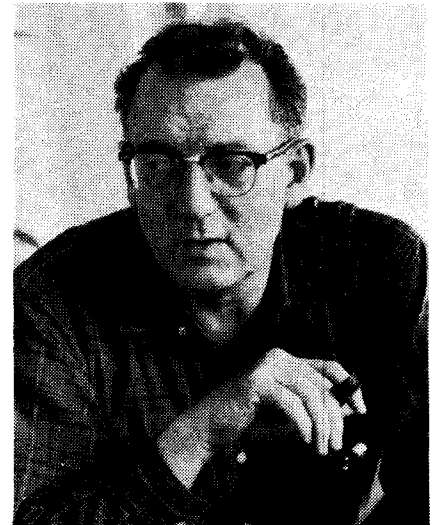


Photo by Reba Hansen (1959)

Trotskyist movement, and on such varied subjects as the Malthus theory of population explosion, the American forms of fascism, whether a new world war is inevitable, and the place of scientific freedom in the Soviet Union.

The fund will be launched at the New York memorial meeting for Hansen, scheduled to be held 3:00 p.m. January 28 at the Marc Ballroom, 27 Union Square West (between 15th and 16th streets).

Contributions to the fund may be sent to Joseph Hansen Publishing Fund, 14 Charles Lane, New York, N.Y. 10014.

and program of Trotskyism. Joe joined the party in 1934 and never wavered in his convictions and affiliations.

He majored in English and edited the campus literary magazine, *Pen*. Before graduating Joe moved in 1936 to the San Francisco area where, as a party activist, he plunged into the chilly waters of maritime unionism, which was then going through turbulent internal and class battles. Together with Barney Mayes, he helped edit the *Voice of the Federation*, the organ of the Maritime Federation of the Pacific, representing all the maritime unions. He also wrote for *Labor Action*, the weekly of the California Socialist Party edited by James P. Cannon, the founder of American Trotskyism. Cannon had transferred to the West Coast from New York following the entry of the Trotskyist forces

into the Socialist Party of Norman Thomas. Joe took charge of that paper from Jim.

This was Joe's initial immersion in the mass workers movement, which remained the breath of his existence. He was the finest sort of revolutionary intellectual, who placed his talents and education at the service of the socialist cause and wholeheartedly identified with the aims and aspirations of the multimillions who produce the wealth of the world.

Within the party, Joe at first fell under the influence of a group dominated by Martin Abern, one of the movement's pioneers. This induced him to distrust the leadership qualities of Cannon and to keep him at arm's length. "I can truthfully say," he later wrote in the admirable summation of that experience entitled

"The Abern Clique," "that I was never more suspicious of any man than I was of Cannon—and this suspicion was wholly the result of Abernism."

His Abernite origins did not prevent him and Reba from being chosen to go to Mexico in September 1937 to act as a secretary for the exiled Russian revolutionist Leon Trotsky. Joe served in that capacity until after Stalin's assassination of his arch-adversary in 1940.

Trotsky preferred to have the cool-headed Joe chauffeur his car on outings. According to the recently published memoirs of Jean van Heijenoort, who had been a secretary for almost ten years, Trotsky felt closer to Joe than to any other of the American comrades who assisted the household.

He was on guard duty when the murderer drove his pickaxe into Trotsky's skull, and helped pin the assassin to the floor until the police arrived.

Joe esteemed the training he received in the company of the "Old Man," as Trotsky was called, and tried in every respect to pattern his own political conduct upon that of his teacher. He more than fulfilled that commitment. Once in a while

amongst ourselves, we would smile affectionately at the immoderate rigor he imposed upon himself—and set for others—in pursuit of that ideal.

Yet this self-assumed responsibility was not a burden for Joe; it was a pleasure. The record of his participation in the revolutionary-socialist movement on both the national and international arenas shows how well he lived up to the standards of his mentor.

Joe returned to New York from Mexico following Trotsky's death and the split in the Socialist Workers Party occasioned by the outbreak of the Second World War. He became indispensable as a journalist because of the shortage of qualified personnel. Very few of us could match his literary output. As a member of the National Committee, he then served his apprenticeship in the central leadership of the Socialist Workers Party.

As a result of his discussions with Trotsky in Mexico and his deeper understanding of the stakes in the factional struggles of the party, Joe's attitude toward Cannon and his associates changed into its opposite. He came to appreciate Jim's exceptional capacities at their true value. The

two men grew to be steadfast friends and intimate collaborators.

This relation was so readily recognized that when news came of Cannon's sudden death at the age of eighty-four in the midst of the party's convention in the summer of 1974, it was entirely natural that Joe be called upon to deliver the main speech at the memorial meeting.

Joe had so many accomplishments to his credit that only the most noteworthy of his contributions to the movement can be mentioned here.

Unexpected developments in Eastern Europe arising from the Soviet victory over Nazism in the Second World War posed challenging theoretical problems to the Fourth International. How were the transformations that took place in the countries occupied by the Red Army to be analyzed and appraised?

Joe was among the first to recognize that capitalist property relations had been eliminated in these countries by the end of the 1940s, giving rise to a series of deformed workers states ruled by bureaucratic castes.

He explained that while the Stalinist bureaucrats had restricted, repressed, and choked off workers struggles in occupied East Europe, they had nonetheless been compelled by Truman's war drive to launch a distorted form of civil war against the remaining capitalist forces, even mobilizing the workers to some degree to accomplish this. This conclusion accorded with the method of analysis of the government, state, and economy Trotsky employed in his last writings on Stalinism and the Soviet Union.

This basic analysis was further tested and refined in the crucibles of the Chinese, Cuban, and Algerian revolutions. In analyzing events in Cuba, Joe put special emphasis on the role of the "workers and farmers government" established in the latter part of 1959. Such a government, independent of the capitalists and based on the workers and peasants movements, can arise in the midst of a mass revolutionary upsurge. However, it finds itself in conflict with the capitalist property relations that still dominate the economy.

Thus, a workers and farmers government can lead relatively quickly to the formation of a workers state through the establishment of a qualitatively new socioeconomic foundation (as happened in China and Cuba). Or, if the upsurge is misled or aborted, such a government can lead to a relapse into a rehabilitated capitalist regime (as occurred in Algeria). The concept of a workers and farmers government, originally advanced by the Communist International in Lenin's and Trotsky's day, was made an integral part of the founding program of the Fourth International.

Joe's incisive commentaries enhanced our understanding of the role of the workers and farmers government as a transitional instrument in the transformation of the state.

For the first decade, Joe followed every step in the progress of the Cuban revolu-



Photo taken in 1930 in Pioche, Nevada, where Hansen worked for the Bristol Silver mining company.

tion in the pages of the Trotskyist press. He grasped its historic importance as the breakthrough and pacesetter of the socialist revolution in the Western Hemisphere. In 1960 he visited Cuba, together with Farrell Dobbs, presidential candidate of the party, and helped launch the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. The last words he wrote were a message to the Young Socialist Alliance convention this December, saluting the twentieth anniversary of the victory of the Cuban people.

While solidarizing with the aims of the revolutionary leadership and defending its achievements against U.S. imperialism and its apologists, Joe plainly set forth his criticisms of the manifest shortcomings of Castro's regime, both in its domestic and foreign policies, from the standpoint of the Marxist program. Numerous articles and polemics of his on Cuba can be studied in the just-published book *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution*. It offers ample insight into the progressive thrust and contradictions of the Cuban experience to date.

Joe belonged to the "Old Guard" of American Trotskyism who had to endure the hard times inflicted by the cold-war witchhunt from 1948 through the early 1960s. He was a seaman during the Second World War and could have resumed that occupation except that Truman's loyalty purge barred him and scores of other party members from maritime employment because of their political views and affiliations.

In late 1953, when the party leadership decided to send Joe to the upcoming World Congress in Europe as the person best able to explain the opportunist and liquidationist character of the Cochran faction in the SWP and our differences with the Pablo grouping internationally, the American political police directly intervened to deepen the split in the Fourth International.

Joe's application for a passport was rejected on political grounds by the State Department. No central leader of our party was able to travel abroad to directly discuss our political views with our co-thinkers in the Fourth International until Farrell Dobbs received a passport in the late 1950's. In Joe's case, it was not until January 1961 that he was able to obtain his right to a passport and travel abroad.

This prolonged period of persecution and isolation bore down on and disheartened many of our former co-workers. Joe was a tower of strength throughout those difficult years, especially in the bitter faction fight that culminated in the breakaway of the Cochran group from the SWP in 1953 and the split in the Fourth International inspired by Michel Pablo.

Joe never lost confidence in the prospects of the working class or the decisive role of the proletarian party in bringing about a socialist America in a socialist world. He carefully analyzed the phenomenon of McCarthyism and helped elaborate a policy to counter its threat. During the darkest days of the 1950s he taught classes on Marx's *Capital* at the Trotsky School. We were then so short-handed that



With Trotsky and Natalia Sedova in Mexico in October 1937.

our theoretical monthly, the *International Socialist Review*, could not be produced in New York; Joe and I, assisted by Frank Graves, had to publish it for a while in Los Angeles.

Transcending his upbringing in a provincial place, Joe managed to acquire a world-historical outlook on all questions. He had assimilated the internationalism at the basis of Marxism into the marrow of his bones. He carried this into practice as an envoy of the Socialist Workers Party in promoting the unification of the Trotskyist forces that had been divided since 1953, and consolidating that unity early in the 1960s before the new wave of radicalization began. He helped draft the documents that provided the platform for overcoming the nine-year split.

The launching of *Intercontinental Press* (then named *World Outlook*) was one of the most important products of the unification. From 1963 to 1965 it was put out in mimeographed format by Joe and Reba with the help of Pierre Frank to serve as a weekly news service to the international movement and provide its cadres with information and timely analyses of events that could help orient their thinking and activities.

If an institution can be, as Emerson says, "the lengthened shadow of a man," that was certainly the case with *IP*. The universal scope of its coverage and its exceptionally high technical and political quality have given it an enviable reputation in radical circles on all continents.

At one time or another Joe edited the principal publications of the Socialist Workers Party, the *Militant* and the *International Socialist Review*. He was an

extremely exacting editor who detested slipshod work in any endeavor, whether in preparing a meal, repairing a motor, or polishing an article. I sometimes marveled at his punctilious insistence on checking a quotation or verifying a fact. He set very high standards for his staff. Yet he asked no more of them than of himself.

Joe was guided in all his political work by the method of the Transitional Program, elaborated as the charter of the Fourth International while he was with Trotsky in Coyoacán, as well as by the Leninist strategy of party building. He was constantly preoccupied with the grand problems of political strategy in the emancipatory struggles of the proletariat whether these took place in Portugal, China, Chile, or an advanced capitalist country.

Joe mustered all the knowledge he had gleaned from his teachers in the polemics over Latin American policy connected with the factional alignments in the Fourth International from 1969 to 1977. He was most proud of these writings. His contributions not only clarified the issues at stake but helped set the tone of objective exposition in the debate. This facilitated the eventual resolution of the major differences between the contending factions, which were dissolved in late 1977. He, as much as anyone else, was responsible for the fact that this most prolonged struggle of tendencies in the history of the labor Internationals ended not in separation, but in a better-grounded ideological homogeneity.

He did not feel that the task of unifying the dispersed Trotskyist cadres had been completed with the fading of the factional

situation in the leadership of the United Secretariat. He looked forward to the next steps in that process whereby the comrades of the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International, who had refused to go along with the 1963 reunification, would be brought together with us in a single organization. He did what he could in these last years to accelerate this convergence, which has still to be consummated.

* * *

My own association with Joe goes back to the grim days of the Moscow Trials in 1937-38 when we collaborated with Trotsky to unmask these frame-ups to the world. He, as part of the secretarial staff in Coyoacán; myself as national secretary of the American Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky in New York.

Our first joint literary venture was the writing of the introduction to Trotsky's last work, *In Defense of Marxism*.

Felix Morrow had made a draft that focused exclusively on the political issues posed by the conflict with the petty-bourgeois opposition of Burnham, Shachtman, and Abern and impermissibly omit-

ted the underlying philosophical and methodological aspects. We, like Trotsky, considered the fundamental questions of Marxist theory involved of greater long-term importance than the immediate issues that had precipitated the factional disputes.

The Political Committee rejected Morrow's treatment as inadequate and turned the assignment over to us. Our agreement on basic matters provided a durable basis for intimate collaboration over the succeeding decades.

We worked together on the editorial boards of the *ISR*, the *Militant*, and *IP*. We also drafted countless resolutions and theses for the movement over the years. I had the habit of submitting much of what I wrote to his discerning judgment, and he rescued me, as he did so many others, from committing errors, large and small.

We had dissimilar temperaments but were of like mind in our conceptions of philosophy, politics, and methods of organization. We had learned from Trotsky and Cannon the indispensable necessity of teamwork and spurned the "star system" so rife in bourgeois society and among intellectuals that elevates considerations

of personal prestige and individual accomplishment above the collective needs of the movement.

Joe was skilled at shorthand and a paragon of industriousness. We never worried whether he would fail to meet a deadline. This highly versatile man had wide-ranging interests. He was an assiduous student of Freud, of botany and geology, and of the latest developments in the physical sciences and theories of artistic creativity. His acquaintance with rather esoteric subjects and his skills in handicraft often amazed me.

Joe sometimes impressed people as being taciturn. Though he was convivial enough among close friends, he was not given to chitchat. He grew more and more reserved in that respect in later years, as though he was husbanding his energy for priority matters.

He came of sturdy stock (his father is still living at ninety-five) and was physically vigorous and active up to 1965, when he suffered a massive peritonitis attack in Paris that brought him close to death's door. When Evelyn and I met him and Reba at the airport upon their return to the United States, we were shocked and dis-



With Trotsky in Coyoacán.

mayed to see how frail his bodily frame looked. He never fully regained his health from that time on.

* * *

Just as we joined forty years ago in exposing the Moscow Trial frame-ups against Trotsky and the Old Bolsheviks, so I stood by Joe's side when he became the target of a pettier but no less perfidious and shameless slander campaign engineered by Gerry Healy, leader of the Workers Revolutionary Party of Britain, who had broken from the Fourth International in 1963. The Healyite poison penmen accused Hansen of being an agent of the GPU and the FBI and of conspiring in Trotsky's assassination. They have dumped buckets of dirty lies week after week since October 1975, designed to discredit Joe and compromise the SWP and the Fourth International.

Healy's vengefulness is traceable to his rage at Joe's effectiveness in consummating the 1963 unification and preventing him from blocking it. He was infuriated by Joe's scathing indictment of his sectarian politics and hooligan organizational practices.

Joe remained unflappable amidst these unremitting provocations. He neither ignored the false charges nor became entangled in answering them bit by bit to the detriment of carrying out other tasks. Taking his cue from Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky, who were likewise victims of slanders in their day, he set subjectivity aside and took the occasion of Healy's vendetta to show its political motivation as the expression of sectarianism gone berserk and the bankruptcy of that type of anti-Marxist politics.

His articles refuting the allegations, assembled in an educational bulletin entitled "Healy's Big Lie," can serve as a textbook on how Marxists handle the most despicable attacks by enemies of their movement.

Joe was one of the twelve plaintiffs in the landmark suit of the SWP against government harassment.

Joe's reputation as a revolutionist remains spotless; the results of his forty-five years of service are enduring. He was the trusted confidant of Leon Trotsky and James P. Cannon for good reasons. At the moment of his death he was one of the most respected leaders and influential theoreticians of the Fourth International.

We commend his career to younger revolutionists as an example to learn from and emulate. As he said in his message to the Young Socialist Alliance this New Year's:

"At some point in life, youths are confronted with a crisis of orientation—that is, to what course should they dedicate themselves for the rest of their lives? My choice was Trotskyism, a choice I have never regretted.

"I hope this will be the occasion for others to make a similar choice.

"For the Fourth International!

"For the Socialist Workers Party!

"For the Young Socialist Alliance!"

January 20, 1979