

THE ASSASSINATION OF TROTSKY

INTRODUCTION

Expelled from the Soviet Union in 1929, Trotsky was eventually given asylum in Mexico through the intervention of the Mexican artist Diego Rivera*:

"The painter Diego Rivera approached the Mexican President, General Lazaro Cardenas*, on our behalf. . . . President Cardenas . . . decided to grant us asylum".

(Natalia S. Trotsky, in: Victor Serge & Natalia S. Trotsky: 'The Life and Death of Leon Trotsky'; London; 1975; p. 210).

In 1928 Rivera had married the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo* and, in the same year, had been expelled from the Mexican Communist Party

". . . after expressing sympathy for the views of Trotsky".
('Independent', 25 November 1993; p. 24).

Leon Trotsky and his wife Natalia landed from an oil tanker in the Mexican port of Tampico at the beginning of January 1937. From the coast,

". . . a train provided by the Mexican Government took us"
(Natalia S. Trotsky: *ibid.*; p. 211).

to the capital, Mexico City.

Trotsky

". . . settled down with the Riveras in Kahlo's house in the colonial village of Coyoacan, now a suburb of Mexico City -- the so-called Casa Azul (Blue House), now a museum".

('Independent', 25 November 1993; p. 24).

Later, however, Trotsky became involved in an affair with Frida Kahlo:

". . . a veritable passion . . . carried these two away in a mad clandestine affair".

(Alain Dugrand: 'Trotsky in Mexico'; Manchester; 1992; p. 19).

and in early 1939 the Trotskys moved to a new address in the same district:

"After disagreements with the muralist, he (Trotsky -- Ed.) moved to another house nearby in May 1939".

('Independent', 25 November 1993; p. 24).

The house to which he moved was a rented house in the Avenida Viena in Coyoacan.

THE MAY 'ASSAULT'

About 4 a.m. on 23 May 1940, some twenty armed men, dressed in police and army uniforms, made what appeared to be an attack upon the Trotskys' house at Coyoacan.

"The five or six men on duty at the nearby police post reported that a major and a lieutenant had appeared at the head of a group of policemen, and that they had been taken by surprise, disarmed and tied up before they could put up any resistance".
(Natalia S. Trotsky: op. cit.; p. 258).

"The intruders carried ropes, rope ladders, rubber gloves, incendiary bombs, a rotary saw, several revolvers and at least two machine-guns".
(Nicholas Mosley: 'The Assassination of Trotsky'; London; 1972; p. 36).

They

" . . . employed as arsenal of modern weaponry -- high explosives, bombs, machine guns and sub-machine guns".
(Robert Payne: 'The Life and Death of Trotsky'; London; 1978; p. 435).

Afterwards the intruders escaped in two cars belonging to Trotsky:

"The raiders took two of the cars belonging to the Trotsky household with them".
(Isaac D. Levine: 'The Mind of an Assassin'; London; 1959; p.87).

Questioned by the police shortly after the incident,

" , , , Leon Davidovich (Trotsky -- Ed.) . . . mentioned the name of the Mexican painter David Alfaro Siqueiros*, and added that he had been acting on GPU orders".
(Natalia Trotsky: op. cit.; p. 258).

and amplified this by saying:

"The author of the attack is Josef Stalin, through the medium of the GPU".
(Leandro A. S. Salazar: 'Murder in Mexico: The Assassination of Leon Trotsky'; London; 1950; p. 10).

Suspicious Features

The police investigation into the affair was carried out under the supervision of Colonel Leandro Salazar, Chief of the Presidential Police, and his immediate superior General Manuel Nunez, District Chief of the Federal Police. Salazar later wrote a book detailing the investigation. The investigating officers immediately noted a number of suspicious features about the incident:

"There were many mysteries about the raid".
(Robert Payne: *ibid.*; p. 435).

Firstly, the house had been converted into a veritable fortress:

"We had a high wall built round the grounds. Any visitor had to pass

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through a solid iron gate which a young comrade would open only if he had received explicit instructions and after he had examined the visitor through a spy-hole".
(Natalia S. Trotsky: op. cit.; p. 251).

"The security precautions at the villa had been carefully designed to prevent the guard from being surprised and overcome by a hostile force".
(Isaac D. Levine: op. cit.; p. 85).

"Ten Mexican policemen in a hut outside the house were kept on duty in two shifts; they were there for the Trotsky's protection by order of President Cardenas".
(Nicholas Mosley: op. cit.; p. 34).

Furthermore, the house was protected inside by eight armed guards (seven Americans and a German). How, in these circumstances, had the intruders gained entrance?:

"There were mysteries -- . . . the question of how the raiders got in"
(Nicholas Mosley: op. cit.; p. 15).

Secondly, how had the intruders known that the guard

" . . . stationed with a machine-gun on the watch-tower was absent that night"?
(Robert Payne: op. cit.; p. 429).

Thirdly, why had the guards neither fired any shots nor been shot at?

"There were mysteries -- . . . why no opposition was put up".
Nicholas Mosley: *ibid.*; p. 15).

"The behaviour of Trotsky's guards also aroused his (Salazar's -- Ed.) distrust: why had they been strangely passive? Why had none of them been shot at?."
(Isaac Deutscher: 'The Prophet Outcast: Trotsky: 1929-1940'; Oxford; 1989; p. 491).

"How were they (the intruders -- Ed.) able to cow the guards, who lived together in a single room, so that not a single shot was fired by them?"
(Robert Payne: op. cit.; p. 435).

"The cook said she had seen Otto (guard Otto Schuessler -- Ed.) standing carrying a pistol during the raid watchfully and passively in the kitchen doorway".
(Nicholas Mosley: op. cit.; p. 41).

Fourthly, how had the intruders known that the ignition keys were left in the cars? They had

" . . . started up Trotsky's two cars -- the keys were kept in them, . . . which the raiders seemed to know".
(Nicholas Mosley: op. cit.; p. 39).

Fifthly, despite what Trotsky himself described as

" . . . the exceptionally high technological level of the attempt",
(Leon Trotsky: 'The Comintern and the GPU', in: 'Fourth International', Volume 1, No. 6 (November 1940) (hereafter listed as 'Leon Trotsky (1940)'; p. 150).

and the fact that

" . . . altogether some two hundred shots were fired"
(Leon Trotsky: 'Stalin seeks my Death', in: 'Fourth International', Volume 2, No. 7 (August 1941) (hereafter listed as 'Leon Trotsky (1941)'; p. 201).

by the intruders, and

" . . . sixty bullets had been fired into the bedroom from four different directions".
(Natalya S. Trotsky: op. cit.; p. 257).

yet

" . . . no one was dead or wounded".
(Leandro A. S. Salazar: p. 5).

"In spite of the hundreds of shots fired, no one . . . was injured".
(Harry Block: 'Mexico's Phantom Conspiracy', in: 'Nation', Volume 140, No. 23 (8 June 1940); p. 703).

Sixthly, one of the servants told police of 'secret consultations' between Trotsky and his guards on the evening before the incident:

"The parlourmaid said there had been long and secret consultations between Trotsky and his guards on the evening before the attack".
(Nicholas Mosley: op. cit.; p. 41).

The investigators did not accept Trotsky's own 'explanation' that he had escaped death only by 'a lucky accident':

"How did we survive? Obviously, thanks to a fortunate accident".
(Leon Trotsky (1941): op. cit.; p. 202).

Self-Assault?

Thus, from the outset the police investigators were, with good reason, dubious about the genuineness of the assault:

"The members of the inquiry began to question the reality of the attack,. . . Perhaps Trotsky and his disciples had mounted the pantomime themselves to gain publicity".
(Alain Dugrand: 'Trotsky in Mexico'; Manchester; 1992; p. 45).

Within a few days these doubts were being ventilated in the press. 'El Nacional' (The National) reported the incident under the headline:

"TROTSKY SUBJECTED TO A THEATRICAL ATTEMPT IN HIS HOME".
('El Nacional' (25 May 1940), in: Leon Trotsky (1941): op. cit.; p. 205).

'El Popular' (The Popular) declared on 27 May:

"The attempt with every passing day awakens great doubts and seems more and more suspicious and less and less logical"
(*'El Popular'* (27 May 1940), in: Leon Trotsky (1941): op. cit.; p. 205).

The New York *'Nation'* reported on 8 June 1940:

"The clumsy attack on Trotsky's house seems too pat to be true. It bears all the earmarks of a put-up job".
(Harry Block: op. cit.; p. 704).

Trotsky himself records that by 28 May, five days after the incident,

". . . the investigating authorities were already completely swung over to the idea of 'self-assault'.
(Leon Trotsky (1941): op. cit.; p. 205).

and he confirms that by 30 May

". . . all the police agents proceeded from the theory of self-assault, and conducted themselves insolently with me, my wife and my collaborators".
(Leon Trotsky (1941): *ibid.*; p. 203).

As a result, two of Trotsky's secretary/guards were arrested together with two of the household staff:

"Two of my secretaries, Otto (Schuessler -- Ed.) and Charles (Cornell -- Ed.) and two individuals connected with my household, B and S, were placed under arrest".
(Leon Trotsky (1941): op. cit.; p. 205).

"I had had Trotsky's two secretaries arrested".
(Leandro A. S. Salazar: op. cit.; p. 21).

On 31 May, Trotsky protested on the conduct of the police to President Cardenas, who immediately ordered the arrested men to be released:

". . . Trotsky . . . protested to President Cardenas against the arrest of his two secretaries. . . . The President ordered the immediate release of Trotsky's secretaries".
(Isaac Deutscher: op. cit.; p. 492).

The Role of Robert Harte

The investigating authorities were satisfied that

". . . the raid could not have been carried out without the cooperation of someone in Trotsky's entourage".
(Isaac Deutscher: op. cit.; p., 491).

The person who immediately came under suspicion in this connection was the guard who had been on duty on the night of the incident, Robert Sheldon Harte, the son of wealthy American businessman Jesse S. Harte, President of Intermediate Factors' Corporation, and

". . . a friend of Mr. Hoover's -- J. Edgar Hoover, director of the

Federal Bureau of Investigation".
(International Committee of the Fourth International: 'How the GPU murdered Trotsky'; London; 1981; p. 301).

Harte had disappeared with the intruders:

"The guard on night duty, Robert Sheldon Harte, had disappeared".
(Leon Trotsky (1941): op. cit.; p. 201).

and

" . . . one of the police bound outside, Ramirez Diaz, reported: . . . 'Bob (Sheldon Harte -- Ed.) . . . went with them voluntarily. This story seems closest to the facts".
(Joseph Hanson: 'The Attempted Assassination of Leon Trotsky', in: 'Fourth International', Volume 1, No. 4 (August 1940); p. 86).

Furthermore, Trotsky's Russian secretary, Fanny Yanovich, told the police that on 23 May, the day before the incident,

" . . . from six o'clock in the evening she noticed that Sheldon showed evident signs of nervousness., She had never seen him like this before".
(Leandro A. S. Salazar: op. cit.; p. 94).

As has been said, the intruders left in two of Trotsky's cars,

" . . . taking Sheldon Harte with them. He was seen by the tied-up policemen . . . to climb in willingly. One policeman even said that Sheldon drove one of the cars".
(Nicholas Mosley: op. cit.; p. 39-40).

and one of the intruders, Nestor Sanchez Hernandez, following his arrest, confirmed

" . . . that Sheldon had driven one of the cars".
(Leandro A. S. Salazar: op. cit.; p. 92).

and asserted

" . . . that Harte had been bought".
(Isaac D. Levine: op. cit.; p. 97).

It was soon established that the intruders had gained entry to the house because

" . . . Sheldon Harte opened the door"
(Nicolas Mosley: op. cit.; p. 38).

to them.

Almost a month after the incident at Trotsky's house, on 25 May 1940, the body of Robert Harte was dug up in an isolated farm in the village of Santa Rosa. The farm had been

" . . . rented by Siqueiros's brothers-in-law, Luis and Leopoldo

Arenal".

(Alain Dugrand: op. cit.; p. 46).

Harte had been murdered, and the police established that he had been

" . . . killed while he slept, full of trust".

(Leandro A. S. Salazar: op. cit.; p. 93).

"Eye-witnesses . . . said that they had seen Harte moving around the farmhouse freely and going out for walks without any guard or escort".
(Isaac Deutscher: op. cit.; p. 493).

Trotsky, however,

" . . . vehemently asserted that Sheldon was their victim, not their accomplice; but he could offer no proof".

(Isaac Deutscher: op. cit.; p. 491).

Salazar was satisfied that Harte had been murdered because he 'knew too much', that is, because he knew that the attack had been a spurious one organised by or on behalf of Trotsky himself:

"It is evident that Sheldon knew too much.

If he fell into the hands of the police, which must happen sooner or later, he could be made to talk. The dead do not talk".

(Leandro A. S. Salazar: op. cit.; p. 93).

The Organisers

Within two days of the incident, police chief Salazar

" . . . became convinced that Siqueiros had master-minded the attack".
(Robert Payne: op. cit.; p. 433).

and Trotsky's American lawyer, Albert Goldman, confirms that

" . . . the leader of the attack turned out to be the Mexican painter David Alfaro Siqueiros".

(Albert Goldman: 'The Assassination of Leon Trotsky: The Proofs of Stalin's Guilt'; New York; 1940; p. 66).

Siqueiros had been a close associate of the artist Diego Rivera:

"On his (Siqueiros's — Ed.) return to Mexico in 1923, he formed an artistic-political group with . . . Diego Rivera. . . . They founded 'El Machete', an independent . . . periodical".

(Leandro A. S. Salazar: op. cit. p. 205).

and, like Rivera, was a supporter of Trotsky:

"Siqueiros . . . has more than once extolled Trotsky above any other revolutionary figure".

(Leandro A. S. Salazar: *ibid.*; p., 206).

Other leading participants had been Siqueiros's wife Angelina Arenal, and his brothers-in-law Luis and Leopoldo Arenal.

Siqueiros did not deny his participation in the incident. He told the Dominican weekly 'Ahora!' (Now!) in October 1972:

"I got hold of an army major's uniform and disguised myself as an officer. Twenty of my companions disguised themselves as soldiers. We took the police guarding the Coyoacan fortress by surprise and immobilised them".
(International Committee of the Fourth International: op. cit.; p. 105).

"Twenty-seven people in all were arrested and their statements made clear what had actually happened. Siqueiros had procured the police uniforms, the arms . . . and had himself directed operations in the uniform of a police major".
(Victor Serge & Natalia S. Trotsky: op. cit.; p. 260).

The Role of the Communist Party

On 1 June 1940, the Mexican Communist Party pointed out that the practice of individual terrorism was not in accord with Marxist-Leninist principles:

"The Communist International, the International of Lenin and Stalin, and with it the Parties of the whole world, have never proclaimed nor practised individual terroristic struggle".
(*'La voz de Mexico'* (The Voice of Mexico) (1 June 1940), in: Leon Trotsky (1940): op. cit.; p. 155).

and on 20 June the Party issued a statement explicitly denying any involvement by the Party or its members in the incident:

"None of those inculpated . . . was a member of the Communist Party. . . . A gang of uncontrollable elements and agents provocateurs had been responsible".
(Mexican Communist Party: Statement of 20 June 1940, in: Victor Serge & Natalia S. Trotsky: op. cit.; p. 260).

A further statement followed on 23 June:

"Numerous persons appear directly and indirectly implicated, among them David Alfaro Siqueiros, named as the leader of the attack. The Communist Party of Mexico declares categorically that none of the participants in the provocation is a member of the Party, that all of them are uncontrollable elements and agents provocateurs".
(Mexican Communist Party: Statement of 23 June 1940, in: Leon Trotsky (1940): op. cit.; p. 154).

However, in a statement on 30 August 1940, President Cardenas sought to smear the Mexican Communist Party by implying that it had been responsible for the May 'armed assault' on Trotsky:

"The Communists are in league with a foreign power in organising armed attacks that dishonour civilisation. The result has been the recent crime".
(Lazaro Cardenas: Statement of 30 August 1940, in: Alain Dugrand: op. cit.; p. 52-53).

The only connection uncovered between the intruders and the Mexican Communist Party was that one of the women involved, Julia Barrados, was the estranged wife of David Serrano Andonegui, who was

" . . . a member of the Political Bureau of the Mexican Communist Party".
(Isaac D. Levine: op. cit.,; p. 83).

But Serrano was eliminated from the enquiry when he

" . . . established an alibi".
(Isaac D. Levine: ibid,; p. 96).

The First Legal Proceedings against the Intruders

Siqueiros being in hiding, the first trial in connection with the incident at Trotsky's home was that in September 1940 of his accomplices, headed by the Arenal brothers. The most serious charges against them were those of the murder of Harte and of conspiring against Trotsky's life. However, their trial was halted by the issue of an amparo (a legal prohibition of prosecution):

"An amparo was . . . granted against charging the Arenal brothers and the other conspirators with the murder of Sheldon Harte".
(Isaac D. Levine: op. cit.; p. 188-89).

"The charges brought against them concerning the raid were largely dropped. Charges of conspiring against the life of Trotsky were dropped. . . . Charges of impersonating public officials were dropped. . . . Charges concerning the murder of Sheldon were dropped".
(Nicholas Mosley: op. cit.; p. 53-54).

The Second Legal Proceedings against the Intruders

The police eventually tracked Siqueiros

" . . . to his hide-out among the miners in the western state of Jalisco, where he was arrested towards the end of September 1940".
(Isaac D. Levine: op. cit.; p. 187-88).

Siqueiros

" . . . did not deny his participation in the May raid, but he maintained that the Communist Party had nothing to do with it".
(Isaac Deutscher: op. cit.; p. 492).

Siqueiros and his accomplices

" . . . were indicted on nine counts and were charged with organising the . . . massive assault and with responsibility for the murder of Harte".
(Isaac D. Levine: op. cit.; p. 188).

In April 1941, the defendants were acquitted of all the serious charges, including the murder of Harte and armed assault on Trotsky's house:

"The charges against Siqueiros concerning Sheldon, as those against the Arenal brothers, were dropped".
(Nicolas Mosley: op. cit.; p. 57).

"The court accepted Siqueiros's allegation that the firing of over 300

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bullets inside the Trotsky house had been 'for psychological purposes' only".
(Isaac D. Levine: op. cit.; p. 188).

"Siqueiros found himself freed of the charges of homicide, attempted homicide, use of firearms, criminal conspiracy and usurpation of official functions. This was hailed as an acquittal".
(Isaac D. Levine: op. cit.; p. 188).

"The charges that remained . . . were the comparatively minor offences of housebreaking, unlawful use of police uniforms, robbery and damage to property. . . .

New indictments were supposed to be drawn up covering these lesser charges. Meanwhile, Siqueiros was out on bail",
(Isaac D. Levine: ibid.; p. 188).

After these proceedings,

" . . . released on bail, Siqueiros disappeared from Mexico for several years".
(Isaac Deutscher: op. cit.; p. 492).

until

" . . . he reappeared in Mexico in 1944".
(Victor Serge: 'Further Details of Trotsky's Death', in: Victor Serge & Natalia S. Trotsky: op. cit.; p. 277).

However, the case was never concluded:

"On August 14, 1945, the evening 'Ultima Noticias' (Latest News -- Ed.) explained that the case could not be re-opened because the Siqueiros dossier had 'mysteriously disappeared'"
(Victor Serge & Natalia S. Trotsky: op. cit.; p. 277).

"The file has not yet been closed".
(Victor Serge & Natalia S. Trotsky: ibid.; p. 277).

It is clear that the Mexican authorities preferred to drop proceedings against the perpetrators of the 'assault' on Trotsky's house rather than risk the exposure in court of the fact that the 'assault' had been a spurious one, organised by or in collusion with Trotsky.

The action of the Mexican authorities is explicable on the following grounds:

firstly, that the Mexican state was dependent upon United States imperialism -- as instanced, among other things, by

" . . . Mexico's dependence on the United States for income from tourism, from exports, and from the earnings of Mexican workers employed north of the border".
('Collier's Encyclopedia', Volume 16; New York; 1992; p. 83).

When, for example, the Mexican government nationalised foreign-owned oil companies in March 1938,

" . . . the British government . . . immediately broke off diplomatic relations".
('New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia', Volume 24; Chicago; 1992; p. 48).

while

" . . . US President Franklin D. Roosevelt* indicated that, if Mexico would make prompt and fair payments, he would not intervene diplomatically on behalf of the oil companies".
('New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia', Volume 24; Chicago; 1992; p. 48).

so that, as a result,

" . . . the oil companies eventually were forced to settle their claims on essentially Mexican terms".
('New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia', Volume 24; Chicago; 1992; p. 48).

secondly, that Trotsky, a leading disruptor of the international communist movement, was an agent of US imperialism. The American historian Professor William Chase, of Pittsburgh University, who is researching Trotsky's life, declares:

"I can tell you we have concrete information that Leon Trotsky too (as well as Diego Rivera -- Ed.) was an informant of the US government".
('Independent', 25 November 1993; p. 24).

THE ASSASSINATION

Some three months after the staged attack, a genuine assassin who had infiltrated the Trotsky household succeeded in inflicting a fatal blow to Trotsky's head with an alpenstock.

The assassin had been introduced to the Trotskys by the American Trotskyist Sylvia Ageloff, who did secretarial work for Trotsky. He had been Ageloff's lover since the summer of 1938, being known to her as 'Jacques Mornard'. He

" . . . usually drove her to the Avenida Viena in his expensive car; and when her work was done, he awaited her at the gate. The guards came to know him well and often chatted with him".
(Issac Deutscher: op. cit.; p. 484).

Trotsky was taken to hospital, where he died on 21 August, and on 27 August the body was cremated.

Mornard told the Mexican police that

" . . . his real name was Jacques Mornard-Vandendreschd, born at Teheran of Belgian parents".
(Leandro A. S. Salazar: op. cit.; p. 106).

but this story proved to be false.

A letter found on him by the police stated:

"In case anything unfortunate occurs to me, I ask the publication of this letter".
('Jacques Mornard': Letter for Publication, in: Albert Goldman: op. cit.; p. 8).

The letter declared that he had been a dedicated follower of Trotsky and had regarded him as a great revolutionary leader:

"I was a devoted disciple of LT, and I would have given the last drop of my blood for the needs of the cause".
('Jacques Mornard': Letter for Publication, in: Albert Goldman: op. cit.; p. 5).

However, the letter continued, when he ultimately met Trotsky he became completely disillusioned:

"For me it was a great disillusionment, since in place of finding myself face to face with a political chief who was directing the struggle for the liberation of the working class, I found myself before a man who desired nothing more than to satisfy his needs and desires of vengeance.

. . .

It was proposed to me that I go to Russia in order to organise there a series of attempts against different persons, and in the first place against Stalin. This was . . . contrary to all my principles. . . .

I came to the conclusion that perhaps the Stalinists were not so far from the truth when they accused Trotsky of pre-occupying himself with the working class as if it were a dirty sock. . . .

I was astonished to see with what contempt he spoke of the Mexican Revolution and of everything that was Mexican".
('Jacques Mornard': Letter for Publication, in: Albert Goldman: op. cit.; p. 6-7).

The long declaration he made to the police in hospital

" . . . was no more than an amplification of his letter".
(Leandro A. S. Salazar: op. cit.; p. 131),

It stated:

"I was disillusioned with Trotsky because he was a great egoist, to such a degree that nothing interested him except his own affairs and his own interests. He abused the working class".
('Jacques Mornard': Statement to Police, in: Albert Goldman: op. cit.; p. 11).

The assassin asserted that the final incident which determined his attempt to kill Trotsky was the latter's refusal to allow him to take Sylvia Ageloff with him on his mission to Russia:

"When I asked him (Trotsky -- Ed.) if I could take Sylvia with me (to Russia -- Ed.), he told me in a firm voice: 'It is not possible'. . . .

For me this was total destruction. . . . It was then that there was born in my brain the idea to kill him . . . and then commit suicide".
('Jacques Mornard': Statement to Police, in: Albert Goldman: op. cit.; p. 11, 12).

He smuggled the weapon into the Trotsky house concealed in a coat:

"I took the alpenstock from the gabardine coat, grabbed it tightly and dealt him a tremendous blow on the head".
('Jacques Mornard': Statement to Police, in: Albert Goldman: op. cit.; p. 12).

He insisted that he had no connection with the Soviet secret police:

"He volunteered the information that he was not a member of the GPU"
('Jacques Mornard': Statement to Police, in: Albert Goldman: op. cit.; p. 18).

and told Trotsky's lawyer, Albert Goldman, who was allowed to interview him in prison, that he had been a supporter but not a member of the French Section of the Fourth International:

"Q: Were you a member of the French Section of the Fourth International?

A: No, I was only a sympathiser".

('Jacques Mornard': Prison Interview, in: Albert Goldman: op. cit.; p. 21).

The Trial of 'Jacques Mornard'

In April 1943 the trial took place of 'Jacques Mornard' for the murder of Trotsky. He

" . . . was found guilty of murder".
(Victor Serge & Natalia S. Trotsky: op. cit.; p. 275).

"He made almost no defence. . . . The court . . . sentenced him to twenty years' imprisonment. . . . He appealed but the verdict was upheld".
(Robert Payne: op. cit.; p. 474).

The Identification of 'Jacques Mornard'

During his long imprisonment, 'Jacques Mornard' gave no further information about his motives for the assassination and no clues as to his real identity:

"Since that fatal day almost nineteen years ago, the assassin has stubbornly refused to produce any evidence or witnesses as to his claimed birth, schooling, military service, past employment and other activities, or to acknowledge the members of his family. . . .

Serving a twenty-year sentence, the prisoner in the Mexican Federal Penitentiary has not once . . . allowed the mask to slip off his face".
(Isaac D. Levine: op. cit.; p. xi, 4).

In September 1950, however, one of the prison psychiatrists, Dr. Alfonso Quaroz Cuaron, visited Spain

" . . . with copies of . . . Mornard's fingerprints. He gave them to the fingerprint expert at the headquarters of the Madrid police and . . . was told that they matched those of a certain Jaime Ramon Mercader del Rio, arrested in Barcelona on June 12 1935. In the police file there were pictures of Ramon Mercader, full face and in profile, and there was

not the least doubt that this was the same person as . . . Mornard".
(Robert Payne: op. cit.; p. 475).

Mercader had been arrested when police raided a group of artistic anarchists, the 'Cervantes Artistic Recreational Circle', which met in a Barcelona bar. He had been released later in the year under an amnesty. His father, Pablo Mercader, had married his mother, Caridad del Rio, then aged 19, in 1911. His parents had later separated.

Mercader's Release

In May 1960.

" . . . Ramon Mercader walked out of jail. . . . He flew on a Cuban passenger plane to Havana . . . and was then flown to Prague".
(Robert Payne: op. cit.; p. 477).

CONCLUSION

The Trotskyists claim the intrusion into Trotsky's home in May 1940 was a genuine attempt to assassinate him, and that this and the actual assassination itself in August were both carried out by Soviet agents on Stalin's orders.

But leaving aside the fact that Marxist-Leninists reject individual terrorism as a legitimate form of struggle, there is no evidence to connect Stalin or the Soviet government with either the phoney attempt or the real assassination.

There is nothing to connect Stalin or Marxist-Leninists with the fact that on his release from his Mexican prison the assassin went to Czechoslovakia. By 1960 Stalin himself had been dead for eight years and Czechoslovakia was ruled a gang of anti-socialist revisionists.

But lack of any evidence does not deter the Trotskyist propagandists from attributing the authorship of Trotsky's assassination to Stalin. Trotsky's American lawyer Albert Goldman expresses this view succinctly when he says that 'no evidence is necessary to convict Stalin':

"No evidence other than the murder itself would be necessary for people with political knowledge and understanding to conclude that STALIN is responsible for the murder".
(Albert Goldman: op. cit.; p. 58).

But what would have been the motive for Stalin to organise the assassination of Trotsky, who had been exiled from the Soviet Union since 1929 and whose 'Fourth International' had

" . . . made little headway among the world's workers".
(Nicholas Mosley: op. cit.; p. 181).

The strongest Trotskyist party in the world at this time was the 'Socialist Workers' Party' in the United States, formed only in January 1938. But even this

" . . . remained a tiny chapel . . . which was never able to acquire any political weight".
(Isaac Deutscher: *ibid.*; p. 477).

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There is, therefore, no truth whatever in the theory that in 1940 Trotsky represented any kind of threat to Stalin and his aims:

"Stalin's pursuit and persecution of Trotsky in Mexico makes little sense".
(Nicholas Mosley: op. cit.; p. 31).

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

- CARDENAS, Lazaro (pron. KAR'-they-nas), Mexican military officer and politician (1895-1970); general (1923); Governor of Michoacan (1928-32); Minister of the Interior (1931); Minister of War and Marine (1933); President (1934-40); Minister of Defence (1943-45); Commander-in-Chief of Army (1945); awarded Stalin Peace Prize (1955).
- KAHLO, Frida, Mexican painter (1910-54); married painter Diego Rivera (1928).
- RIVERA, Diego M., Mexican painter, especially of murals (1886-1957); in Europe (1907-21); Director, Central School of Fine Art (1929-32); in USA (1930-34); visited Soviet Union (1927, 1955).
- ROOSEVELT, Franklin D., American lawyer and politician (1882-1945); married Eleanor Roosevelt (distant cousin) (1905); Senator, New York (1910-13); Assistant Secretary of Navy (1913-20); Governor, New York (1928-32); President (1933-35).
- SIQUEIROS, David A. (pron. see-KAIR-os), Mexican painter, especially of murals (1896-1974); in Europe (1919-22); deported from USA (1932); founded Central School of Realist Art, Mexico City (1944).