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Basic biographical data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Bert Cochran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other names (by-names, pseud. etc.):</td>
<td>E.R. Frank ; Alexander Goldfarb ; White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date and place of birth:</td>
<td>December 25, 1913 [?], New York, NY (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date and place of death:</td>
<td>June 6, 1984, New York, NY (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality:</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupations, careers, etc.:</td>
<td>Writer, editor, journalist, lecturer, trade union and party organizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time of activity in Trotskyist movement:</td>
<td>1934 - ca. 1954</td>
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Biographical sketch

Bert Cochran, in the Trotskyist movement also known by his pseudonyms E.R. Frank and White, was born in Poland as Alexander Goldfarb. In the early 1930s, he attended the University of Wisconsin and was recruited to Trotskyism by Max Shachtman. In 1934, he joined the ranks of the Communist League of America (CLA), the Trotskyist party founded and led by James P. Cannon, Max Shachtman and Martin Abern. CLA was renamed American Workers Party (AWP) when it fused with the group of A(braham) J(ohannes) Muste. In accordance with Trotsky's turn towards the 'entryist' tactic, the majority of the AWP, including Bert Cochran, entered Norman Thomas' Socialist Party (SP) where the Trotskyists formed a faction called the Appeal Group (named after their organ Socialist Appeal). They were expelled from the SP in 1937 and on January 1, 1938, they founded the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Cochran belonged to the founding members of this new American Trotskyist party and for several years served as member of its leading body, the National Committee (NC). In the 1930s and 1940s, Cochran played an important role in the union work of the SWP; thus he worked as a district organizer of the MESA (Mechanics Educational Society of America) in Ohio and was responsible for the party's educational and factional trade union work in the UAW (United Auto-mobile Workers of America) in Detroit, Michigan. He also took responsibilities as a party organizer in New York City. In 1952/53, Cochran formed a faction inside the SWP and for a while held positions close to those advocated by the European majority (led by M. Pablo, E. Mandel and P. Frank) in the International Secretariat of the Fourth International (ISFI). In 1954 Cochran was eventually expelled from the SWP as a result from a sharp factional struggle in which he, together with Harry Braverman and George Clarke - the faction became known as the Cochranites - stood against party leader James P. Cannon and his majority faction known as the Cannonites. The factional struggle chiefly focused both on different evaluations of Stalinism and on what the Cochranites criticized as sectarian vanguardism with regard

1) The year given here is uncertain since various sources are giving different years, ranging from 1913 to 1917!
to the SWP. By this bitter split, the SWP not only lost Cochran and some other talented NC members but also a good deal of its working class militancy, particularly in the Detroit and Cleveland areas. Together with Harry Braverman and round about 100 other expellees, Cochran founded the Socialist Union and launched a magazine which was called The American Socialist; it ran from 1954 to 1959 (totally 38 issues were published). More or less dropping from active politics and repudiating factionalism and vanguardism, Cochran from 1954 to the end earned his living as a free-lance writer and journalist and as a lecturer in the fields of politics, socialism, unionism and contemporary American history. He wrote several books, amongst them biographies on Truman and Stevenson (see bibliography below) and contributed several articles to the Monthly Review and other independent socialist journals as well as to The American Socialist; he also contributed to The Washington Post, The Nation and The Progressive. Cochran taught at the New School for Social Research (New York City) and at SUNY's (State University of New York) Empire State College; he was also a senior fellow at Columbia University's Research Institute on International Change.

Cochran died of cancer on June 4, 1984. He was survived by his wife Cynthia Cochran (b. Copeland, 1923-2006), the sister of Vince (Vincent B.) Copeland, founder and long-time leader of the Workers World Party, a dissident group which had emerged from the SWP.

Selective bibliography:

- **Selective bibliography: Books/pamphlets authored by Cochran**


- **Selective bibliography: Books/pamphlets and journals (co-)edited by Cochran**

  The American Socialist (New York, NY) [ISSN 0517-4872] <TSB 0024>
  Fourth International (New York) <TSB 0532>

- **Selective bibliography: Books, collections, journals, bulletins to which Cochran contributed**

  The American Socialist (New York, NY) [ISSN 0517-4872] <TSB 0024>
  Bulletin du Secrétariat Européen de la IVe Internationale (Paris?) <TSB 0210>
  Bulletin intérieur / Secrétariat International de la IVe Internationale (Paris) <TSB 0542>

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Bert Cochran

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The Educator (New York, NY) <TSB 0463>
Fourth International (New York, NY, 1940-56) <TSB 0532>
Internal Bulletin / Socialist Workers Party (New York, NY) <TSB 1548>
Masses and Mainstream (New York, NY) [ISSN 0738-5447]
Monthly Review (New York, NY) [ISSN 0027-0520]
The Nation (New York, NY) [ISSN 0027-8378]
The Progressive (Madison, Wis) [ISSN 0033-0736]
Three reports on the Chinese communes / with a foreword by E.L. Wheelright. - Sydney : Outlook, [ca. 1960]. - 28 pp. - (Outlook discussion pamphlet ; 8)
The Washington Post (Washington, DC) [ISSN 0190-8286]

- Selective bibliography: Books and articles about Cochran

[Anon.]: Bert Cochran [Biographical sketch, Wikipedia article]

Note: More informations about Bert Cochran are likely to be found in some of the books, pamphlets, university works and articles listed in the relevant chapter(s) of the Lubitz' Leon Trotsky Bibliography [ISSN 2190-0183], e.g. chapter 7.5.18.
Some interesting information is to be found on the website The American Socialist, which focuses on the Socialist Union and Cochran's paper The American Socialist.
Some of Cochran's writings are to be found as electronic resources within the Bert Cochran (E.R. Frank) internet archive.

Note on archives

The Bert Cochran papers 1935-1978 (1.25 linear feet) are held by the Tamiment Library, New York City; the collection number is #205. This collection includes Cochran's correspondence with prominent SWP leaders like for example J.P. Cannon, F. Dobbs, G. Clarke, F. Morrow, A. Swabeck, his correspondence with A.J. Muste, documents relating to his activities in the UAW and to the SWP factional struggles of 1939/40 (Burnham-Shachtman split), 1945/46 (controversy with the Morrow-Goldman faction); reports and speeches on post-World War II national and international political issues as well as several unpublished manuscripts by Cochran.

Wolfgang and Petra Lubitz, 2006
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