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Basic biographical data

Name: Pierre Frank

Other names (by-names, pseud. etc.):
Paul ; P.F. ; P.Fr. ; Pedro ; Pierre ; Pierrette; F. Mattch ; Pierre Franck ; Raymonde ; Cousins

Date and place of birth: October 24, 1905, Paris (France)

Date and place of death: April 18, 1984, Paris (France)

Nationality: French (since 1927)

Occupations, careers, etc.: Chemical engineer, political organizer, writer, editor

Time of activity in Trotskyist movement: 1927 - 1984 (lifelong Trotskyist)

Biographical sketch

Note: This biographical sketch is chiefly based on biographical notes found in Pour un portrait de Pierre Frank : écrits et témoignages, Montreuil, 1985 and in Prager, Rudolf: Frank Pierre, in: Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier français, publié sous la dir. de Jean Maitron, partie 4, 1914-1939, t. 28, Paris, 1986, pp. 246-250.

Pierre Frank was born in Paris (IXe arrondissement) on October 24, 1905 as son of Aron Frank (b. 1876) and his wife Anna (b. Schirmann, b. 1876), Jews who emigrated from Russia to France in 1904, settled at Paris and earned their living as tailors. The Frank family got French citizenship only in 1927. After having attended high school, Pierre Frank graduated with a diploma from the Ecole de Physique et de Chimie Industrielles de Paris. In the course of his studies as a chemical engineer he participated in the founding of the Union Générale des Etudiants Techniciens de l'Industrie, du Commerce et de l'Agriculture (UGETICA, General Union of Technical Students in Industry, Commerce and Agriculture); as a trade-unionist Frank was active in the Fédération des Produits Chimiques (Chemical Federation) which was affiliated to the communist-led Confédération Générale du Travail Unifié (CGTU, United General Confederation of Labour). In 1925 he became an active member of the Parti Communiste Français (PCF, French Communist Party).

Frank was one of those French CP activists who supported the 1927 (Russian) platform of the United Opposition (Trotskyists and Zinovievists) and who sided with the anti-Stalinist and anti-Bukharinist tendency within the CPSU and in the Comintern. Two years later and as a consequence from sympathizing with Trotsky's Left Opposition Frank was expelled from the French CP in 1929. Together with

1) Cousins, Pierrette and Raymonde are pseudonyms which were used by Pierre Frank together with Raymond Molinier.
other renowned oppositionists and expellees, in the same year he launched the French journal *La Vérité (The Truth)* – one of the eldest Trotskyist papers – and became its managing and contributing editor. Several months later, in April 1930, Pierre Frank was elected member of the executive committee of the LC (Ligue Communiste [Communist League]), the first French Trotskyist organization affiliated to the ILO (International Left Opposition, Bolshevik-Leninists), the international tendency created and led by Leon Trotsky and considering itself at that time as an external faction of the Comintern. In 1932 Frank became a member of ILO's International Secretariat and in this capacity he travelled several European countries participating in unification negotiations and various other organizational activities. 

From July 1932 to June 1933 Frank settled at Büyük Ada (Prinkipo Islands, Turkey) and served as one of Trotsky's secretaries, accompanying him to Copenhagen in November 1932 where Trotsky delivered his famous last public speech which dealt with the Russian revolution on the occasion of its 15th anniversary.

Back in France, Frank got deeply involved in the political battles within the French workers movement in face of the fascist danger. When at the end of 1934 the *Ligue Communiste* decided – on behalf of Trotsky and in accordance with his recently launched tactical orientation towards *entryism* – to send all its members and supporters into the French Socialist Party (which at that time was called *SFIO, Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière* [French Section of the Workers' International]), the French Trotskyists formed the GB-L (Groupe Bolchevik-Léniniste [Bolshevik-Leninist Group]) as a faction inside the *SFIO*. This new policy of *entryism* also became known as the French turn because the French section was the first one applying the new *entryism* tactics. Frank was elected an alternate member (for Jean Rous) of the leading body of the *SFIO* in June 1935 but already some months later was expelled from it, just as the majority of the GB-L faction.

The inner-Trotskyist quarrels about the problems of tactics and party building which emerged as a consequence from their expulsion from *SFIO* eventually led to a sincere and long-lasting split of the French Trotskyist movement. Personal rivalries and a deep animosity put a strain on the relationship between the various leaders of the French Trotskyist movement. A minority of the French Trotskyists was led by Pierre Frank and by the brothers Raymond and Henri Molinier who advocated a broad regroupment outside the *SFIO* and thus got in sharp conflict with Leon Trotsky and with the majority of his French adherents.

The Frank-Molinier group launched a new journal called *La Commune* and in January 1936 founded a *Comité pour la IVe Internationale* (Committee for the Fourth International) which was renamed *Parti Communiste Internationaleiste (PCI [Internationalist-Communist Party]*) in March 1936. Frank's and Molinier's *PCI* was not affiliated with Trotsky's Movement for the Fourth International, and only for a very short period (June-October 1936) it joined forces with the majority tendency organized in the *Parti Ouvrier Internationaliste (POI [Internationalist Workers Party]*) before divorcing again. During the following years when France was governed by the People's Front the schism of 1935/36 lasted and even was perpetuated when in 1939 the Second World War began. In those years Frank wrote a lot of articles which chiefly appeared in the *PCI* papers *La Vérité* and *La Commune*. When in 1939 Frank was sentenced in absentia to prison for articles which had appeared in the journals he was editor-in-chief of, he went into hiding and eventually left France for Belgium where he launched the paper *Correspondance internationale*.

In 1940 he went to Britain where he got in contact with British Trotskyists as well as with Trotskyist immigrants from Belgium, France and other European countries. Shortly before Trotsky was assassinated in Mexico in 1940, Pierre Frank started a correspondence with him in order to find out about the possibilities of re-joining forces and reconciling the hitherto hostile Trotskyist tendencies. Frank's uphold in Britain lasted till 1946; in 1940 he was arrested as a 'dangerous foreigner' and eventually interned in a detention camp on the Isle of Man until 1943. Shortly after the end of the War in Europe he was again arrested by British authorities and not released before February 1946. He immediately returned to France via Belgium and participated in the first post-World War II interna-
In April 1969 Frank and Krivine engineered the fusion of both organizations, May-June 1968 in France. During those weeks of turmoil Pierre Frank was arrested and jailed again. Soon became a Trotskyist or member of the communist-led [Revolutionary Com.

Eventually was given a new lease of life when in 1966 the PCI (Parvi Communiste Internationaliste). It goes without saying that Pierre Frank was also an outstanding activist with regard to the support of the Algerian and Indochinese liberation struggle against French colonialism. It was in the course of its day-to-day leadership together with Ernest Mandel, Joseph Hansen and Livio Maitan. It goes without saying that Pierre Frank was also an outstanding activist with regard to the support of the Algerian and Indochinese liberation struggle against French colonialism. It was in the course of such actions of solidarity that Frank was arrested and sentenced in 1956.

In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s Pierre Frank travelled several countries of Europe, the Americas and Asia as a representative of the International Secretariat (from 1963: United Secretariat) of the Fourth International and he participated in all world congresses held by the Fourth International between 1948 and 1979. He was FI's spokesman on matters of the anti-colonial revolution and was concerned once and again with the question of how revolutionary socialists should approach the phenomenon of Stalinism. For many years Pierre Frank shaped the profile of the Fourth International and was deeply involved in its day-to-day leadership together with Ernest Mandel, Joseph Hansen and Livio Maitan. It goes without saying that Pierre Frank was also an outstanding activist with regard to the support of the Algerian and Indochinese liberation struggle against French colonialism. It was in the course of such actions of solidarity that Frank was arrested and sentenced in 1956.

In the first half of the 1960s and after many years of stagnation, unsuccessful enthrail and setbacks, the PCI consisted of only a few dozen members, almost invisible to the public. Thanks to Pierre Frank this tiny nucleus of old but devoted revolutionaries could at least survive the so-called dog days and eventually was given a new lease of life when in 1966 the JCR (Jeunesse Communiste Révolutionnaire [Revolutionary Communist Youth]) was formed, emerging from a left oppositional current within the communist-led UEC (Union des Etudiants Communistes [Union of Communist Students]); spiritus rector of that group was the young Trotskyist Alain Krivine who simultaneously was a leading member of the PCI. Under his leadership and with the active and decisive support by Pierre Frank the JCR soon became a Trotskyist organization which undoubtedly played an eminent role during the events of May-June 1968 in France. During those weeks of turmoil Pierre Frank was arrested and jailed again.

In April 1969 Frank and Krivine engineered the fusion of both organizations, PCI and JCR, to form the LC (Ligue Communiste [Communist League]), which became the new French section of the PCI.

2) In 1963, at the 're-unification congress' of the FI the International Secretariat was renamed United Secretariat (USec, or, USFI).

3) Michel Pablo at that time was secretary of the FI and its main leader since the end of the War.

© by Wolfgang & Petra Lubitz 2004 — page 3
Fourth International, Pierre Frank was elected a member of the Bureau Politique (Political Bureau) of the LC which in 1973 was renamed first FCR (Front Communiste Révolutionnaire [Revolutionary Communist Front]) and short after LCR (Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire [Revolutionary Communist League]). The organization grew remarkably, could attract many – chiefly young – militants during the years after 1968 and soon became a constant political factor in France; LCR can be considered today [2005] as one of the most renowned and relevant political organizations of the radical left in Europe and as one of the strongest sections of the Fourth International, its 'flagship' so to speak. Pierre Frank was not only an indefatigable political organizer and Trotskyist activist but at the same time a very productive writer, editor and translator (see also our selective bibliography below); hundreds of articles and other contributions from his pen can be found in journals like Quatrième Internationale, La Vérité, Intercontinental Press and in almost all journals and bulletins issued by organizations affiliated to or in solidarity with the Fourth International (IS/US). He also contributed articles, prefaces, postfaces and the like to a quite considerable number of books and pamphlets all over the world. Furthermore Pierre Frank translated some major works of Leon Trotsky from Russian into French language and he was editor of some relevant thematic compilations from Trotsky’s writings as well as (co-)editor of a lot of French and international Trotskyist papers and newsletters. In the late phase of his life Pierre Frank wrote some historical monographs, e.g. a two-volume history of the Communist International, a short history of the Fourth International and a book on Stalinism.

After having retired from his political responsibilities during the second half of the 1970s, Pierre Frank died on April 18, 1984 at Hôpital La Pitié, Paris (XIIIe arrondissement) at the age of 78. He was survived by Marguerite Métayer (1916-2005), his companion and co-fighter for many years.

Selective bibliography

- Selective Bibliography: Books/pamphlets (co-)authored by Frank

Appunti per una storia della Quarta Internazionale / trad.: Giorgio Meucci. - Roma : Samonà e Savelli, 1969. - 175 pp. - (Cultura politica ; 53)
Historia de la IV Internacional. - Spånga : Combate, [1977]. - 170 pp. - (Cuadernos rojos ; 22)
The long march of the Trotskyists : contributions to the history of the Fourth International / introd. by Marijke

4) TSB item numbers (e.g. <TSB 0716>) refer to Lubitz' Trotskyist Serials Bibliography, München [etc.] : Saur, 1993, which is out of print but available as PDF file within the framework of the Lubitz' TrotskyanaNet website. In TSB you can find detailed descriptions of the respective Trotskyist journals, newsletters, bulletins and the like.

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Pierre Frank

Bio-Bibliographical Sketch


Revolution & counter-revolution in Europe from 1918 to 1968 / with a biographical introd. By Ernest Mandel. - Amsterdam [etc.]: International Institute for Research & Education [etc.], 2010. - 280 pp. - (Notebooks for study and research ; 49)


Note: Some of Frank's writings are available in the WWW at the Pierre Frank internet archive

- Selective Bibliography: Books, pamphlets, journals (co-)edited by Frank

La Commune : organe de regroupement et d'action révolutionnaire (Paris) <TSB 0346> [no. 2 sq. titled: La Commune de Paris]

Correspondance internationaliste (S.I.) <TSB 0384>

Fourth International / International Executive Committee of the Fourth International (Paris) [ISSN 0429-2790] <TSB 0535>

Intercontinental Press (New York, NY) [ISSN 0020-5303 ; ISSN 0162-5594] <TSB 0657>

Die Internationale (Various places) [ISSN 0535-4005] <TSB 0731>

L'Internationale / Parti Communiste Internationaliste, Section Française de la IVe Internationale (Paris) <TSB 0733>

The Internationalist / International Secretariat of the Fourth International (Nottingham; later: Paris) [ISSN 0444-3314] <TSB 0761>

Internationalist Correspondence = Correspondance internationaliste (London) <TSB 0763>

Quatrième Internationale (Paris etc., 1936- ) [ISSN 0771-0569 - ISSN 0765-1740] <TSB 1282>

Quatrième Internationale (Paris, 1965-68) <TSB 1283>


La Vérité (Paris, 1929-1936) <TSB 1772>

La Vérité (Paris, 1937-1939) <TSB 1773>

La Vérité (Paris, 1940 - ) [ISSN 0294-359X] <TSB 1774>

La Vérité des travailleurs (Paris) <TSB 1781>

World Outlook = Perspective mondiale (Paris ; later: New York, NY) <TSB 1886>
**Selective Bibliography: Books translated by Frank**


**Selective Bibliography: Books, journals, bulletins to which Frank contributed**


L'Archibras (Paris)


Bulletin de discussion / Parti Communiste Internationaliste (Paris, 1951)

Bulletin intérieur / Parti Communiste Internationaliste (Paris, 1944-1952) <TSB 1169>

Bulletin intérieur / Parti Ouvrier Internationaliste (Bolcheviks-Léninistes) (Paris) <TSB 1172>

Bulletin intérieur / Secrétariat International de la IVe Internationale (Paris) <TSB 0542>

Bulletin intérieur de la Ligue Communiste (Paris) <TSB 0226>

Bulletin intérieur d'information / Parti Communiste Internationaliste (pour la Quatrième Internationale) (Paris) <TSB 0229>

Bulletin intérieur du Groupe Bolchevik-Léniniste de la SFIO (anciennement Ligue Communiste) (Paris) <TSB 0231>


Cahiers Léon Trotsky (Various places) [ISSN 0181-0790] <TSB 0277>


Correspondance internationaliste (S.l.) <TSB 0384>

Critica comunista (Milano) <TSB 0394>

Critique communiste (Paris, later: Montreuil) [ISSN 0398-2068 ; ISSN 0759-0989] <TSB 0395>


Ergebnisse & Perspektiven / Sonderausgabe (Essen) <TSB 0474>


Fjärde Internationalen (Uppsala, later: Stockholm, later: Göteborg) [ISSN 0345-3375] <TSB 0518>

Fourth International (New York, NY, 1940-56) <TSB 0532>

Fourth International / International Executive Committee of the Fourth International (Amsterdam; later: Paris) [ISSN 0429-2790] <TSB 0535>

The Fourth International : for the regroupment of the British Section of the Fourth International (Paris, later: London) <TSB 0534>


Inprecor : [French edition] Various places [ISSN 0378-8342 ; ISSN 0294-8516] <TSB 0647>

Inprekorr : internationale Pressekorrespondenz der IV. Internationale (Various places) [ISSN 0256-4416] <TSB 0654>

International Press (New York, NY) [ISSN 0020-5303 ; ISSN 0162-5594] <TSB 0657>

Internal Bulletin / Socialist League of America (Opposition) (New York, NY) <TSB 0358>

International Information Bulletin / Socialist Workers Party (New York, NY) <TSB 1548>

International (London, 1968-84) [ISSN 0020-5788 ; ISSN 0308-3217] <TSB 0673>

International Information Bulletin / Socialist Workers Party (New York, NY) <TSB 1550>

International Internal Discussion Bulletin (New York, NY) <TSB 0694>

International Information Bulletin (New York, NY) <TSB 0695>


International Socialist Review (New York, NY) [ISSN 0020-8744] <TSB 0715>

Die Internationale (Various places) [ISSN 0535-4005] <TSB 0731>

Internationale Perspektiven : marxistisches Informationsbulletin (Paris ; Wien) <TSB 0750>

Internationalist Correspondence = Correspondance internationaliste (London) <TSB 0763>


La Lutte de classes : revue théorique mensuelle (Paris) <TSB 0948>


Mitteilungsblatt der Reichsleitung der Linken Opposition der KPD (Bolschewiki-Leninisten, Sektion der Internationalen Linken Opposition) (Berlin) <TSB 1065>


Permanente Revolution : Zeitschrift der Linken Opposition der KPD (Bolschewiki-Leninisten) (Berlin) <TSB 1192>


Quarta Internazionale : rivista teorica (Roma; later: Milano) <TSB 1280>
Quatrième Internationale (Paris etc., 1936- ) [ISSN 0771-0569 - ISSN 0765-1740] <TSB 1282>
Quatrième Internationale (Paris, 1965-68) <TSB 1283>
Revolutionary Marxism vs class collaboration in Sri Lanka / issued by the National Education Dept., Socialist Workers Party. - New York, NY, 1975. - 24 pp. - (Towards a history of the Fourth International ; 6) (Education for socialists)
Rouge (Paris, later: Montreuil) [ISSN 0035-8509] <TSB 1437>
Socialist Perspective (Sydney, NSW) <TSB 1516>
Socialistisk information (Næstved; later: København) [ISSN 0108-1861] <TSB 1569>
Sozialistische Politik (Frankfurt a.M.) <TSB 1619>
Translations on International Communist Developments (New York, NY) [ISSN 0499-8111]
La Vérité (Paris, 1940 - ) [ISSN 0294-359X] <TSB 1774>
La Vérité des travailleurs (Paris) <TSB 1781>
La Vie du parti : bulletin intérieur (Various places) [ISSN 0043-0404] <TSB 1818>
Pierre Frank

Workers' International News (London) <TSB 1840>
World Outlook = Perspective mondiale (Paris ; later: New York, NY) <TSB 1886>

- Selective Bibliography: Books and articles about Frank

[Anon.]: Pierre Frank. [Biographical sketch, Wikipedia article]
[Anon.]: Pierre Frank n'est plus, in: Rouge <TSB 1437>, 1984 (1109). [Obituary]
Maitan, Livio: Un demi-siècle de détermination de modestie, in: Pour un portrait de Pierre Frank : ecrits et témoignages, Montreuil, 1985, pp. 56-60. [Obituary]
Mandel, Ernest: Pierre Frank est mort, une génération de combattants révolutionnaires qui s'éteint, in: Inprecor :...
Mandel, Ernst: Pierre Frank is dead, a generation of revolutionary fighters is vanishing, in: International Viewpoint <TSB 0726>, 1984 (52), pp. 15-16. [Obituary]


Métyer, Marguerite: Ma vie avec Pierre, in: Pour un portrait de Pierre Frank : ecrits et témoignages, Montreuil, 1985, pp. 13-17


Waters, Mary-Alice: Dernier hommage, in: Pour un portrait de Pierre Frank : ecrits et témoignages, Montreuil, 1985, pp. 84-85. [Obituary]

Note: More informations about Pierre Frank are likely to be found in some of the books, university works and articles listed in the Lubitz' Leon Trotsky Bibliography [ISSN 2190-0183], e.g. in chapters 7.2.04 and 7.5.07
Selective Bibliography: Books dedicated to Frank


Sidelines, notes on archives

— In 1936 Frank made a proforma marriage with Rebecca (nicknamed 'Véra') Lanis, a young woman from Romania. He did so as a special favour for his very friend and comrade Raymond Molinier who at this time was still married with another woman. Because of the proforma marriage Rebecca Lanis could avoid expulsion from France. Molinier later went to Argentina with Lanis as companion. In 1960 Frank was legally divorced from his "wife".

— When Pierre Frank died in 1984, a lot of obituaries and appreciations appeared all over the world; his decease was not only mentioned by the international Trotskyist press but by some renowned bourgeois papers like Le Monde, Le Matin and Libération, too. When the funeral celebration took place on April 27, 1984 at Père Lachaise cemetery, Paris, thousands of militants and sympathizers of the LCR as well as a great number of prominent and unknown Trotskyists from abroad paid him solemn homage. Even Le Monde and Le Matin made reports about this impressive memorial meeting.

— In 1962 it was Pierre Frank who organized the funeral at Père Lachaise of Trotsky's widow Natal'ia Sedova who died at Corbeil (near Paris) on January 23.

— When he gave up all his leadership responsibilities for reasons of age, Pierre Frank was elected a consultative member of the IEC of the Fourth International at its 11th world congress in 1979 as recognition of his unique contribution to international leadership.

— Some cursory remarks on archivalia: A considerable part of Pierre Frank's documents is contained in the Archives of the International Secretariat/United Secretariat of the Fourth International which is housed at BDIC (Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine, Nanterre); various archival material by/about him as well as a good deal of the many internal bulletins to which he contributed can be found in archives all over the world such as for example at the CERMTRI (Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Mouvements Trotskyistes et Révolutionnaires Internationaux, Paris) or at Hoover Institution Archives (Stanford, Cal.). Frank's correspondence with Leon Trotsky and Lev Sedov is contained in the Exile Papers of Leon Trotsky (bMS Russian 13.1) at Houghton Library (Cambridge, Mass.) and in the Trotsky-Sedov Papers (series 231 of the Boris I. Nicolaevsky Collection in the Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Cal.) while his correspondence with Joseph Hansen is contained in the Joseph Hansen Papers which are held at the Hoover Institution Archives (Stanford, Cal.), too. Further archivalia can be traced in the Lev Davidovič Trockij / International Left Opposition Archives, the Rodolphe Prager Papers, and in the Ligue Communiste (France) Archive, all forming parts of the rich archival collections of the IISG/ IISH (International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam).