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***Basic biographical data***

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Jan Frankel</b>
<b>Other names (byname, pseud. etc.):</b>	<b>Anton ; François ; J. ; J.F. ; Jan ; John Frank ; John Glenner ; Werner Keller ; J. Verny ; Viernich ; Vierny ; Walter</b>
<b>Date and place of birth:</b>	<b>1906, ?, (Austrian-Hungary)</b>
<b>Date and place of death:</b>	<b>1984*, ?, USA</b>
<b>Nationality:</b>	<b>Austrian, Czechoslovakian, USA</b>
<b>Occupations, careers:</b>	<b>Translator, secretary, organizer, businessman</b>
<b>Time of activity in Trotskyist movement:</b>	<b>1927 - ca. 1940/41</b>

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***Biographical sketch***

Jan Frankel was born in 1906 as a son of an Austrian-Jewish family – his grandfather had been rabbi at Vienna – in that part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire which in 1919 became Czechoslovakia. Details about his family, childhood and education are not known except the fact that he was fluent in various languages and that he answered "translator" when asked about his profession in 1937.

He was won over to communism by H. Lenorovič and J. Kopp whom he met in a Merano sanatorium in 1923 when recovering from tuberculosis. As a young student he became member of the youth organization of the Czechoslovak CP and as an adolescent a member of the CP. In 1927 he – together with Jiří Kopp and other young communists – belonged to a small circle of left dissidents which in Prague formed the nucleus of what should become the Czechoslovak Trotskyist movement. In the 1930s Jan Frankel – within the Trotskyist movement better known by his various pseudonyms (see above) – played an

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\* Not confirmed by official documents or the like..

important rôle within the *International Left Opposition (ILO)* and its successors\*, thus he participated as Czech delegate in the first (constituent) international conference of the *ILO* which was held in Paris in April 1930. Furthermore he became a close collaborator of Leon Trotsky. Thus in 1930 he went to Büyük Ada (Prinkipo Islands, Turkey) serving as one of Trotsky's secretaries from April 1930 to January 1933. In November 1932 he organized Trotsky's travel and accompanied him to Copenhagen, Denmark, where the hero of the October insurrection delivered his famous Copenhagen speech on the Russian revolution on the occasion of its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Frankel then became responsible for the organizational and internal work of the *International Left Opposition* in Central Europe. After a short illegal stay in Germany (February/March 1933), where the Trotskyists had to go underground immediately after the seizure of power by the Nazis, he went back to Czechoslovakia where Prague had become one of the centres for those Trotskyists who had to flee Germany in order to escape from persecution and arrestation. In 1933, he also became a member of the *International Secretariat*, the leading body of the *International Communist League (ICL)* which had its headquarters in Paris. As a secretary of the ICL, Frankel travelled several European countries and participated in many conferences, for example in a clandestine conference of the exiled German *Internationale Kommunisten Deutschlands (IKD, International Communists of Germany)* which took place at Dietikon (near Zürich, Switzerland) in December 1934. During 1933-1935 Frankel lived in Paris, but had also stays in Czechoslovakia and Switzerland, where he persuaded the small Swiss Trotskyist section, *Marxistische Aktion der Schweiz (MAS)*, to enter the *SPS (Sozialdemokratische Partei der Schweiz, Social-Democratic Party of Switzerland)*. Frankel was an advocate of Trotsky's tactics of entrism launched in 1934. From June till October 1935 Frankel worked again as a secretary to Leon Trotsky who then lived together with his wife Natal'ia in a small township near Oslo, Norway. In autumn 1935 Frankel returned to Czechoslovakia. In December 1936 the Trotskys left Norway and embarked for Mexico, the last station of their exile. Soon after, Jan Frankel followed to Mexico sharing the Trotsky household at Coyoacán from February to October 1937, serving again as Trotsky's secretary and being commissioned with various investigations relating to the work of the famous *Dewey Commission*, which was set up in order to impartially inquire on the charges made against Trotsky and his son in the Moscow show trials 1936-37; in the hearings before the *Dewey Commission* (fifth session, Apr. 13, 1937, Coyoacán, Mexico) Frankel testified as a witness.

At the end of 1937 Frankel went to the United States for personal reasons. For a short time married with American writer Eleanor Clark, Frankel in the United States soon became a member of the *Socialist Workers Party (SWP)*, the newly constituted U.S. section of the *Fourth International*, and contributed a few articles to the *SWP* press under newly adopted pseudonyms. Furthermore in autumn 1939 he became a member of the *Resident International Executive Committee* of the *Fourth International*; the *Resident IEC* had newly been formed after the *FI* headquarters had been shifted from Paris to New York in face of the unfolding World War II.

When a serious factional struggle occurred inside the *SWP* in 1939 which eventually ended in a party split, Frankel sided with the Shachtman-Burnham faction and thus broke with Trotsky and his *Fourth International*.

For some two years he remained a member of Shachtman's *Workers Party* and published some articles in its press before he eventually withdrew from any political activity once and for all. It seems that he absolutely wanted to leave his past behind and disappear from view. Some comrades from his Trotsky years met him in New York where he had adopted a new name - John Frank - and become a naturalized

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\* ILO was renamed *International Communist League (ICL)* in 1933 and *Movement for the Fourth International* in 1936 before in September 1938 the *Fourth International (FI)* was launched.

U.S. citizen. However, after 1950 he left no traces anymore. It is said that he became a wealthy businessman. No details about this phase of his life could be revealed until now since all inquiries with American authorities about his fate remained unsuccessful and all efforts by ex-comrades to get in touch with him were in vain. Australian relatives of Frankel only communicated that he died in the USA in 1984.

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### *Selective bibliography* \*

- ***Selective Bibliography: Books and pamphlets translated by Frankel***

Trotsky, Leon: Was nun? : Schicksalsfragen des deutschen Proletariats / Leo Trotzki. Aus dem Russ. übers. von J. Frankel. Hrsg.: Linke Opposition der KPD. - Berlin : Anton Grylewicz, 1932. - 116 pp.

- ***Selective Bibliography: Books, collections, journals, bulletins to which Frankel contributed***

Bulletin intérieur / Section Belge de l'Opposition Communiste Internationale (Bruxelles) <TSB 1463>

Bulletin intérieur de la LCI (Amsterdam) <TSB 0225>

Bulletin international de l'Opposition de Gauche = Internationales Bulletin der Kommunistischen Links-Opposition (Paris) <TSB 0234>

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

The case of Leon Trotsky : report of hearings on the charges made against him in the Moscow trials / by the Preliminary Commission of Inquiry, John Dewey, chairman. - New York, NY [etc.], 1937. - XIX, 617 pp. [& later ed.] [Containing testimony of Frankel: pp.151-166.]

Informationsdienst / Internationale Kommunisten Deutschlands (Paris) <TSB 0745>

International Bulletin of the Communist Left Opposition (New York, NY) <TSB 0678>

Internes Bulletin der Internationalen Kommunistischen Liga (Bolschewiki-Leninisten) (Paris) <TSB 0645>

Internationales Bulletin der Kommunistischen Links-Opposition (Paris; later: Berlin) <TSB 0758>

Der Kommunist : Zeitschrift der Vereinigten Linken Opposition der K.P.D. (Berlin) <TSB 0846>

The New International (New York, NY) <TSB 1089>

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

Unser Wort (Prag; later: Paris; later: Antwerpen; later: New York, NY) <TSB 1761>

- ***Selective Bibliography: Books and articles about Frankel***

Broué, Pierre: [Biographical sketch], in: *Cahiers Léon Trotsky*, 1979 (1), pp.67-71.

Vogelsanger, David: [Biographical sketch], in: *Vogelsanger, David: Trotzismus in der Schweiz*, Diss., Zürich, 1986, pp. 220-221.

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\* 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 *TrotskyanaNet*. In TSB you can find detailed descriptions concerning the respective Trotskyist journals, newsletters, bulletins and the like.

*Note:* More informations about Frankel is likely to be found in some of the books, pamphlets, university works and articles listed in the relevant chapters of our *Trotsky Bibliography*, 3.ed., vol. 1-2, München [etc.], 1999, e.g. in chapter 7.5.08.

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### *Sidelines, notes on archives*

Since Frankel had a lively correspondence with Leon Trotsky, many original letters and reports of Jan Frankel dating from the 1930s can be found in the various Trotsky archives, e.g. in the *Exile Papers of Leon Trotsky* (BMS Russian 13.1) at *Houghton Library* (Cambridge, Mass.) and in the *Trotskii-Sedov Papers* (series 231 of the Boris I. Nicolaevsky Collection in the Hoover Institution Archives), Stanford, Cal. \* Contributions from his pen can be found – under his various pseudonyms mentioned above – in most of the contemporaneous internal bulletins and in some journals issued by German, Czech, French and other European Trotskyist groups as well as in some international Trotskyist bulletins and in some papers of the SWP and WP, respectively. Unfortunately, there are no sources available concerning the last 40 years of Frankel's life.

*W. Lubitz, rev. January 2006*

This miscellany is part of

The Lubitz TrotskyanaNet

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\* For finding aids and some information about the mentioned archives and collections see the chapter on *Archives : America* within our *TrotskyanaNet* website.