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Basic biographical data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>C. Frank Glass</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other names (by-names, pseud. etc.):</td>
<td>Cecil Frank Glass ; Cecil Glass ; Frank Glass ; Ralph Graham ; Frank Graves ; John Liang ; Li Fu-jen [Li Furen] ; Lucifer ; McClure ; A South African</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date and place of birth:</td>
<td>March 24, 1901, Birmingham (Great Britain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date and place of death:</td>
<td>March 21, 1988, Los Angeles, Ca. (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality:</td>
<td>British, South African, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupations, careers:</td>
<td>Journalist, editor, international revolutionary activist</td>
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</tbody>
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Biographical sketch

This short biographical sketch is chiefly based upon some of those fine obituaries¹ which appeared on the occasion of C. Frank Glass's death, especially those written by Baruch Hirson, Wang Fanxi and Frank Lovell; some additional information has been taken from a recently (2004) published book-length political biography of C. Frank Glass from the pen of Baruch Hirson², a meticulously researched account of the life and work of a revolutionary who lived three lives so to speak: as a pioneer of the communist workers' movement in South Africa in the 1920s, as a journalist, Trotskyist activist and organizer in China in the 1930s and as a Trotskyist writer, editor and educator in the United States from the 1940s to his death.

Born in Birmingham (England) in 1901 as son of Ernest Edward and Gertrude Emily Glass, C(ecil) Frank Glass spent his boyhood in Birmingham, then in London for some two years before in 1911 he emigrated with his parents, his elder brother Norman (1899-1959) and his younger sister Madge to South Africa where he spent his formative years and got his education. Under the impact of World War I, deeply impressed by the Russian revolutions of 1917 and affected by the outrageous injustices inflicted upon the black majority population by the South African white racist and colonialist society, C. Frank Glass became politically radicalised. After briefly serving in the British army at the end of the War, Glass for a short span of time became a member of the Social Democratic Federation before he joined the anti-racist Industrial Socialist League (InSL), a group based in Cape Town, being in sympathy with the Russian revolutionaries and issuing a paper called The Bolshevik. The InSL soon joined forces with other radical left groups such as for example the International Socialist League (ISL) which was headed by David I. Jones, S.P. Bunting and W.H. An-

¹) See the paragraph Selected bibliography: Books and articles about Glass, below.
²) Hirson, Baruch: The restless revolutionary : Frank Glass. [Introd.: Gregor Benton], London, Porcupine Pr., [2004]. This work has been brought to press thanks to David Bruce posthumously (Hirson died in 1999); it has been dedicated to the late Alex Buchman “without whose help the book might never have been written”.

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drews, Marxists in favour of the Communist International (Comintern).

When in 1921 the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) was launched and affiliated with the Comintern on the basis of its famous ‘21 points’, Glass was one – the youngest – of its founding members, soon emerging as one of its leading activists and being elected secretary of its Cape Town branch. Soon later Glass became a full-time CPSA organizer, member of its Executive Committee and business administrator.

In 1925 Glass resigned from his leading positions in the party and later left it, considering the CPSA having moved towards sectarianism. During the following years he spent most of his energy in trade union work by leading the South African Association of Employees’ Organizations (SAAEO), the predecessor of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), and by contributing to its press. He was also a secretary of the Tailors Union. Later he played a leading role in the formation and organization of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa (ICU), the first black trade union of South Africa. In the mid-1920s Glass had a short-lived stay in the South African Labour Party (SALP), too, which at that time was joined by many communists (or, ex-communists) on an individual basis.

C. Frank Glass, who in the meanwhile had settled in Johannesburg, in January 1927 married Fanny Klenerman, an active member of the CPSA until 1931 who organized waitresses and other women workers in the 1920s, gave literary classes for the ICU and taught English to immigrants coming to South Africa, while Glass earned his living primarily as a journalist. The couple took over a small tearoom managed by Fanny, and then ran a bookshop – Frank Glass, Bookseller – which later was extended and renamed Vanguard Booksellers, becoming a focus for people seeking Marxist and radical literature. In 1939 – several years after he had left South Africa [see below] – Glass divorced from Fanny Klenerman and in 1941 married his second wife, Grace Simons (born Saunders, divorced Burton, 1901-1985).

Rejecting the right and ultra-leftist zigzags of Stalinism and opposing the growing Stalinization of the CPSA, Glass in 1928 definitively broke with the organization and became a sympathizer of the Russian and International Left Opposition headed by Leon Trotsky. As early as in 1928 Glass became familiar with The Militant, the mouthpiece of the American Trotskyists. Undoubtedly Glass can be considered as the very pioneer of South African Trotskyism, circulating The Militant and other foreign Trotskyist papers and materials in South Africa and recruiting some people excluded from the CPSA who soon founded tiny groups from which later emerged those organizations which should shape South African Trotskyism.

In 1930 Glass left South Africa for the USA where he met the founders of the young American Trotskyist movement – James P. Cannon, Max Shachtman, Arne Swabeck and others. In the same year Glass proceeded to the Far East. Since he was prohibited to enter Japan, he went to Shanghai (China) earning his life there as a journalist, correspondent, and reporter for various news agencies and newspapers (e.g. Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury, Shanghai Times, China Weekly Review); he also co-edited some newspapers and worked as a radio commentator. In the truly multi-cultural community of Shanghai he soon made acquaintance with other Western sympathizers of the Chinese revolutionaries who had to suffer from brutal suppression and terrible setbacks. Glass could win over some of the Western intellectuals, emigrants and journalists whom he met in Shanghai to the cause of Trotskyism.

The most eminent of those people were two American journalists: Harold Isaacs who later became renowned for his nook The tragedy of the Chinese revolution’, and Alex Buchman who later became a guard of Leon Trotsky in his Mexican exile; Glass also made acquaintance with Richard Sorge, a German journalist who in 1944 was shot by the Japanese fascists as a Soviet spy. Thanks to the works mentioned in our introductory note above and in the bibliographical notes below, Glass’s itinerary and activities both in South Africa and in China are well researched and documented. Thus we should like to sketch his meaning for Chinese Trotskyism only with a few sentences:

3) Glass read the manuscript and suggested several changes and additions to the text.

4) In spring 1941 Sorge informed Moscow about Hitler’s Operation Barbarossa, i.e. the German plans for the forthcoming German attack against the USSR, but Stalin ignored this so that the USSR factually fell victim of Wehrmacht’s surprise attack on June 22, 1941. Furthermore, Sorge in September 1941 informed Moscow that Japan was not going to attack the Soviet Union in the near future
First, he had a very strong impact on other people like Harold Isaacs and provided a good deal of those ideas which became incorporated in the latter’s just mentioned book which stands as a classical and most remarkable account of the fate of the Chinese revolution in the late 1920s and of the terrible failure of Stalinist and Comintren policy leading to the near extermination of the Chinese CP and the vanguard of the Chinese working class.

Second, Glass in China continued – under the newly adopted pen name Li Fu-jen [or, Li Furen] – the revolutionary socialist work which he had begun in South Africa, and he did so independently, i.e. neither on behalf of the International Secretariat of the International Communist League nor of any other political or administrative body. Since 1933 he actively participated in the political work of the Chinese Trotskyists whom he considerably assisted in maintaining or restoring their underground organizations, e.g. by performing important courier work and last not least by generously supplying funds for printing operation or living expenses of comrades working as organizers.

Third, it was through Glass that the leaders of the tiny Chinese Trotskyist forces, who were suffering permanently from repression and persecution under the Chiang Kai-shek dictatorship, could keep in touch with Leon Trotsky in his respective exile countries and with the international headquarters of the Fourth International and its predecessors.

Fourth, Glass had a lively letter exchange with Trotsky and could give first-hand reports and accounts to him about the events and developments in China as well as on Japan's imperialist aggression against China when visiting and having long discussions with Trotsky in Mexico in 1937. He also frequently corresponded with Martin Abern from the Socialist Workers Party and with the Paris-based International Secretariat of the Trotskyist movement.

With regard to his Trotskyist activities in China it should be mentioned, too, that Glass in 1935 was elected a member of the Provisional Central Committee being charged with the position of a secretary-treasurer of the illegal Communist League of China whose ranks included a number of militants expelled from the Communist Party. As Wang Fanxi, a veteran of the Trotskyist movement in China, later mentioned in his memoirs, Glass’ role in the movement was crucial and invaluable. During the 1930s Glass also frequently contributed articles on Chinese subjects and on the policies of Japanese imperialism – signed by pen names – to the American and international Trotskyist press, e.g. to Socialist Appeal, New International, The Militant, as well as to internal bulletins of the Trotskyist movement.

From April 1937 to October 1938 Glass's stay in China was interrupted when he visited the USA making a national speaking tour before travelling to Mexico (August 1937) in order to visit Leon Trotsky [see above]. During his stay in the USA he became fraternal delegate to the founding convention of the Socialist Workers Party. In autumn 1938 Glass again went to China.

Faced with the threatening of Shanghai by Japanese invaders and just a few days before the Japanese air force made its attack on Pearl Harbour which paved the way for the United States' entry into world War II, Glass left China and returned to the United States on a dangerous route and for some years settled in New York City together with his second wife, Grace Simons. Resuming his work as a journalist, he at the same time became active in the American Trotskyist movement, using new pen names, Frank Graves and Ralph Graham. He continued to write articles chiefly on Far Eastern subjects (he continued to sign his articles on China with Li Fu-jen) in Fourth International, The Militant and other Trotskyist papers. From 1944 to the end of the War Glass took also the main responsibility for the editing of The Militant, the Socialist Workers Party's weekly paper, and he belonged to its editorial board for many years.

In 1946 he established a home with his wife Grace in Los Angeles where the couple remained until the end. Grace had inherited a substantial trust when her mother died, and the couple supplemented their income by working on local newspapers like for example the Los Angeles Sentinel. C. Frank Glass

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5) Trotsky and his international fellowship had launched the International Left Opposition (ILO) as an international political current opposing the Communist International in 1930; ILO was renamed International Communist League (Bolshevik-Leninists) (ICL) in 1933, and Movement for the Fourth International in 1936 before the Fourth International (FI) was founded in 1938. The International Secretariat was the leading body of the international Trotskyist organization.
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worked closely with the leadership of the local SWP branch, e.g. with Myra Tanner Weiss, as well as with SWP founder and leader James P. Cannon who moved to Los Angeles in 1953. The Glasses were furthermore engaged in various civil rights and equal rights campaigns as well as in community work. Frank Glass was also editing *Laging Una (Always First)* for several years, a paper for Filipinos in California and Arizona. Although Glass was never seeking formal party positions and most Trotskyists knew him only as a writer on Far Eastern problems and thus by his pen names Li Fu-jen, he nevertheless served on the SWP’s *National Committee* from 1944 to 1963 and then became an advisory member, a category which was abolished in 1975. It should be added that in the 1960s Glass together with SWP veteran Arne Swabeck abandoned the perspective of a political revolution in China, signing the respective documents, which are to be found in internal discussion bulletins of the SWP, by another pen name, John Liang. While Arne Swabeck was excluded from the SWP in 1967, Glass formally remained a member until the end although retiring from active party work in the 1970s. For many long-time members of the Trotskyist movement he remained a highly esteemed authority on Chinese and Far Eastern issues and a living legend. After a long period of illness and after eventually lapsing into a coma, C. Frank Glass died in a Los Angeles hospital on March 21, 1988, just a few days before his 87th anniversary.

**Selective bibliography**

- **Selective bibliography: Books/pamphlets (co-)authored by Glass**


  Vigilante terror in Fontana : the tragic story of O'Day N. Short and his family / Myra Tanner Weiss. - Los Angeles, Cal. : Socialist Workers Party, Los Angeles Local, 1946. - 20 pp. [This pamphlet was publ. under the name of Myra Tanner Weiss but was factually authored by C. Frank Glass]

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

  Laging Una (Los Angeles, Cal.) [ISSN 0300-7855]

  The Militant (New York, NY) [ISSN 0026-3885] <TSB 1026>

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

  Bulletin de la Ligue des Communistes-Internationalistes (Bolcheviks-Léninistes) (Amsterdam) <TSB 0178>

  Cahiers Léon Trotsky (Paris, later: Grenoble; later: Saint Martin d'Hères) [ISSN 0181-0790] <TSB 0277>


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


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

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

  Internal Bulletin / Organizing Committee for the Socialist Party Convention (New York, NY) <TSB 1158>

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

  Laging Una (Los Angeles, Cal.) [ISSN 0300-7855]

  Leon Trotsky - the man and his work : reminiscences and appraisals / Joseph Hansen [et al.] - New York, NY:

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6) 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 concerning the respective Trotskyist journals, newsletters, bulletins and the like.

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The Militant (New York, NY) [ISSN 0026-3885] <TSB 1026>
The New International (New York, NY, 1934-36 and 1938-58) <TSB 1089>
New Masses (New York, NY) [ISSN 0362-6172]
New Militant (New York, NY)
Quatrième Internationale (Paris etc., 1936- ) [ISSN 0771-0569 - ISSN 0765-1740] <TSB 1282>
Revolutionary History (London) [ISSN 0953-2382] <TSB 1375>
Searchlight South Africa (London) [ISSN 0954-3384] <TSB 1461>
Service d'information et de presse / Secrétariat International pour la Quatrième Internationale (Paris) <TSB 1072>
Socialist Appeal (New York, NY) <TSB 1497>
SWP Discussion Bulletin (New York, NY) <TSB 1684>

Selective bibliography: Books and articles about Glass

Ring, Harry: [Obituary], in: The Militant <TSB 1026>, 1988 (May 6)

Selective bibliography: Book dedicated to Glass


Sidelines, notes on archives

— Certain aspects of C. Frank Glass's biography have also been treated - in addition to those items listed in our selective bibliography above - in the following works:
- Wickins, P. L.: The industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa, Cape Town [etc.],
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1978.

- Wang Fan-Hsi [Wang Fanxi]: Chinese revolutionary, Oxford [etc.], 1980. [Also publ. in German, French and Chinese]

— More information about C. Frank Glass is likely to be found in some of the books, pamphlets, university works, and articles listed in the relevant chapters of our *Lubitz' Leon Trotsky Bibliography*, chiefly in those chapters listing items about the Trotskyist movements in South Africa (7.5.14), China (7.5.04), and the United States (7.5.18).

— Several public archives are housing material (letters, documents, photographs, unpublished memoirs and the like) by and about C. Frank Glass, for example:
   - the *Library of Concordia University* (Montreal)
   - *Library of the University of Witwatersrand* (Johannesburg)
   - *Houghton Library, Harvard University* (Cambridge, Mass.): Exile papers of Leon Trotsky (call-no. bMS Russ 13.1)

— An online text archive with title *Frank Glass (Li Fu-jen)* containing several writings by C. Frank Glass - primarily on China and on the war in the Pacific - as well as a short biography about him is to be found within the framework of the Marxists' Internet Archive.

— About Glass' character: "Among Frank's virtues as a communist internationalist and revolutionary was foremost his complete lack of personal ambition. He was a man of conviction: he had his own opinion on nearly every major political question. Once he had formed an opinion, he fought for it stubbornly. However, he was never opinionated, and still less self-serving. He defended his views honestly and fairly. He fought only on issues, never on personalities. In internal struggles, he was magnanimous in victory and gracious in defeat."

— Quotation from an interview which Glass gave to a representative of the Prometheus Research Library one year before his death: "I have been a revolutionary since I was 18 and have no regrets. I wouldn't change a thing. All one can do is put your oar in the water and stroke as hard as you can for life's most important task – social revolution".

Wolfgang and Petra Lubitz, 2006
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