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Basic biographical data

Name:	C. Frank Glass
Other names (byname, pseud. etc.):	Cecil Frank Glass ; Cecil Glass ; Frank Glass ; Ralph Graham ; Frank Graves ; John Liang ; Li Fu-jen [Li Furen] ; Lucifer ; McClure ; A South African
Date and place of birth:	March 24, 1901, Birmingham (Great Britain)
Date and place of death:	March 21, 1988, Los Angeles, Ca. (USA)
Nationality:	British, South African, USA
Occupations, careers:	Journalist, editor, international revolutionary activist
Time of activity in Trotskyist movement:	1928 - 1988 (lifelong Trotskyist)

Biographical sketch

This short biographical sketch is chiefly based upon some of those fine obituaries 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 Hirson**, 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. Frank Glass spent his boyhood in Birmingham, then in London for some two years before in 1911 he emigrated with his

* See the paragraph *Selected bibliography: Books and articles about Glass*, below.

** 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".

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 radicalized. 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. Andrews, 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 ultraleftist zig-zags 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 book *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 1941 was shot by the Japanese fascists as a 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:

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 Comintern 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 move-

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

** In spring 1941 Sorge transmitted to Moscow the date of the beginning of *Operation Barbarossa*, the code 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.

*** 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.

ment.

From April 1937 to October 1938 Glass's stay in China was interrupted when he visited the USA making a national speaking tour before traveling 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 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 Swaback 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 Swaback 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 longtime 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***

Revolutionaries in Mao's prisons : the case of the Chinese Trotskyists / Li Fu-jen [i.e. Frank Glass] and Peng Shu-tse. - New York, NY : Pathfinder Pr., 1974. - 23 pp.

* 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.

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>
Documents sur le mouvement révolutionnaire en Chine / Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Mouvements
Trotskyiste et Révolutionnaires Internationaux. - 1-2. - Paris, 1989. - 79 + 80 pp. - (Les cahiers du
C.E.R.M.T.R.I. ; 54.55)
Fourth International (New York, NY, 1940-56) <TSB 0532>
In Defense of Marxism (New York, NY) [1983-1990 with title: Bulletin in Defense of Marxism] <TSB 0616; TSB
0219>
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 :
Merit Publ., 1969. - 128 pp.
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>
Vida e morte de Trotsky / Pierre Frank [et al.] Trad. de J. Ferdinando Antunes. - Lisboa : Ed. Delfos, [1974]. - 240
pp. - (Compasso do tempo ; 19)

- ***Selective bibliography: Books and articles about Glass***

[Anon.]: Li Fu-jen (Frank Glass, John Liang), 1901-1988, pt. 2: in China and the USA / Prometheus Research
Library, New York, in: *Revolutionary History* <TSB 1375>, 1.1988 (2), p. 4. [Obituary]
Alvin, Milton: [Obituary], in: *Socialist Action* <TSB 1489>, 1988 (May).
[Broué, Pierre?]: Frank Glass (Li Furen) (1901-1988), in: *Cahiers Léon Trotsky* <TSB 0277>, 1988 (35), pp. 124-

* According to Hirson, Baruch: The restless revolutionary : Frank Glass, London, [2004], p.247.

125. [Obituary]

Hirson, Baruch: Death of a revolutionary : Frank Glass (Lee Fu-jen, John Liang), 1901-1988, in: *Searchlight South Africa* <TSB 1461>, 1.1988 (1), pp. 28-41. [Obituary]

Hirson, Baruch: Li Fu-jen (Frank Glass, John Liang), 1901-1988, pt. 1: in South Africa, in: *Revolutionary History* <TSB 1375>, 1.1988 (2), pp. 1-3. [Partly identical with author's "Death of a revolutionary"] [Obituary]

Hirson, Baruch: The restless revolutionary : Frank Glass / [introd.: Gregor Benton]. - London : Porcupine Pr., [2004]. - XVI, 251, [8] pp.

Lovell, Frank: Cecil Glass (1901-1988), in: *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* <TSB 0219>, 1988 (52), pp. 28-29. [Obituary]

Lovell, Frank: Cecil Glass (1901-1988), in: *Revolutionary labor socialist : the life, ideas, and comrades of Frank Lovell* / ed. by Paul Le Blanc and Thomas Barrett. - Union City, NJ : Smyrna Pr., 2000, pp. 302-304. [Obituary]

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

Wang Fanxi: Frank Glass (Li Fu-jen), 1901-1988, in: *International Viewpoint* <TSB 0726>, 1988 (141), pp. 20-21. [Obituary]

- ***Selective bibliography: Book dedicated to Glass***

Wohlforth, Tim: The prophet's children : travels on the American Left / Tim Wohlforth. - Atlantic Highlands, NJ : Humanities Pr., 1994. - XVIII, 332 pp. - (Historical memories)

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:

- Roux, Edward: S.P. Bunting, a political biography, Belville, 1993.
- Simons, H. Jack and R.E. Simons: Class and colour in South Africa, 1850-1950, Harmondsworth, Mx., 1969
- Wickins, P. L.: The industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa, Cape Town [etc.], 1978.
- Johns, Sheridan: The birth of the Communist Party of South Africa, in: *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 9.1976 (2).
- Johns, Sheridan: Raising the red flag : The International Socialist League and the Communist Party of South Africa, 1914-1932, Belleville, 1995.
- Wang Fan-Hsi [Wang Fanxi]: Chinese revolutionary, Oxford [etc.], 1980. [Also publ. in German, French and Chinese]

— More informations 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 *Trotsky Bibliography*, 3. ed., München [etc.], 1999, primarily in those chapters listing items about the Trotskyist movement in South Africa (7.5.14), China (7.5.04), and the United States (7.5.18).

— Several archives are containing 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)
- *The Exile papers of Leon Trotsky*at *Houghton Library, Harvard University*(Cambridge, Mass.)
(Call-no. bms Russ 13.1) *
- *The Trotskii-Sedov Papers (series 231 of the Boris I. Nicolaevsky Collection)*the *Alexander H. Buchman Papers, and the Wang Fan-hsi Correspondence 1962-1987*all preserved at the *Hoover Institution Archives*(Stanford, Cal.) **

— A text archive containing several scanned 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 with title *Frank Glass (Li Fu-jen)* within the framework of the *Marxists' Internet Archive*, URL: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/glass/>

— 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.*"****

W. Lubitz, rev. Aug. 2005

This miscellany is part of

The Lubitz TrotskyanaNet

* For some details about this collection see the *Archives : America* chapter within the framework of our *TrotskyanaNet* website.

** See preceding note.

*** Wang Fanxi: Frank Glass (Li Fu-jen) 1901-1988 : obituary, in: *International Viewpoint*, 1988 (141), p. 21.

**** From an obituary of C. Frank Glass by the Prometheus Research Library, in: *Revolutionary History*, 1.1988 (2), p. 4.