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Basic biographical data

Name:	Paul N. Siegel
Other names (bynames, pseud. etc.):	Paul Noah Siegel ; P.S. ; P.N.S. ; Paul Shapiro
Date and place of birth:	June 24, 1916, Paterson, NJ (USA)
Date and place of death:	April 26, 2004, New York, NY (USA)
Nationality:	USA
Occupations, careers, etc.:	Professor, educator, literary critic, writer, editor, political activist
Time of activity in Trotskyist movement:	1937 - 2004 (lifelong Trotskyist)

Biographical sketch

The following biographical sketch is chiefly based on the obituaries and biographical notes listed in the paragraph Selected bibliography: Articles about Siegel (see below), especially on the contributions by Alan Wald, Jeff Mackler and Cliff Conner.

Paul N(oah) Siegel, Professor emeritus of English, was a renowned and distinguished Shakespeare scholar and for many years an outstanding intellectual figurehead of the American Trotskyist movement. He was born in New Jersey on June 24, 1916 to Jewish parents (Nathan Siegel, a salesman, and his wife Jennie Siegel, born Rabinowitz) who had come to the USA from the Eastern Polish part of the Czarist Empire as immigrants. In January 1948 he married Edith Zwerling (1907-1992), an antique dealer and Trotskyist activist with whom he had a daughter, Rosalind.

Although his mother was a religious woman, Paul Siegel was not required to attend synagogue. At an early age the child began to read extensively and soon became a veritable bookworm. Among the books he read as a child were works by utopian socialists. At the age of 15 he considered himself a socialist, and for several years when attending highschool he was a sympathizer of the *SP (Socialist Party)* led by

Norman Thomas. Additionally to reading, the young Paul Siegel was influenced and radicalized, too, by an elder cousin, Noah Greenspan, and like him he became a member of the *YCL (Young Communist League)*, the youth organization of the *Communist Party*, in 1936 when graduating as B.S. from the *College of the City of New York*. Paul Siegel was admitted to *Harvard University* where he graduated as M.A. in 1939 and earned a PhD in English literature in June 1941 with a work titled *Studies in Elizabethan melancholy*.

Siegel's flirtation with Stalinism was quite shortlived: under the impression of the infamous Moscow trials 1936/38, by reading Max Shachtman's *Behind the Moscow trials*, Trotsky's *The revolution betrayed* and buying regularly the Trotskyist paper *Socialist Appeal* at the university campus, he soon left the *YCL* and became a close sympathizer of Trotskyism. His socialist education was strongly influenced and furthered by the New England Trotskyists Larry Trainor, George Lavan Weissman and Antoinette Konikow who recruited him for the newly formed organization of the American Trotskyists, the *SWP (Socialist Workers Party)* which had been founded on January 1, 1938. Some months later Siegel launched a Cambridge *SWP* branch for which he could win students from the Harvard and Ratcliff campuses. The Cambridge branch soon fused with the Boston branch which was led by Larry Trainor. When the first serious split occurred in the *SWP* (the Max Shachtman faction versus the James P. Cannon faction), Siegel like Trainor and Weissman sided with the latter.

In the meanwhile Paul Siegel had decided to become a teacher; however, at the end of 1941 - shortly before Japan attacked Pearl Harbour and the United States went to war - Siegel was subjected to the military draft. For some four years he served in the *Medical Administration Corps* of the *U.S. Army* (in England, France and the U.S.) rising to the rank of a captain; he kept in touch with the *SWP* by means of correspondence and wrote articles on subjects of literary criticism.

After the end of World War II Paul Siegel became a teacher and instructor of English literature: first at the *University of Connecticut* (Storrs, Conn.), then from 1946-1949 at the *College of the City of New York*. During his New York years he was an active member of the New York City branch of the *SWP* and a regular contributor on literary subjects - using the pseudonym Paul Shapiro - to the party's paper *The Militant*. In New York, too, he met *SWP* activist Edith Zwerling whom he married in 1948. In 1949 the couple had to leave New York for Wisconsin where Siegel from 1949-1956 taught at *Ripon College* (Ripon, Wis.), first as an associate professor, from 1952 as professor of English.

When a new factional struggle unfolded in the early 1950s, Siegel sided with the supporters of Bert Cochran; the 'Cochranites' considered the *SWP* as sectarian which they left in 1953 launching a new group, the *American Socialist Union*, which published the paper *The American Socialist* to which Siegel contributed some book reviews.

In 1956 Siegel became professor of English at *Long Island University* (Brooklyn, NY) and chairman of the English Literature Department of that university (1956-1971). He held a lot of concurrent positions, too; thus for example he was consulting member of the *World Centre for Shakespeare Studies*, member of the *Columbia University Seminar on the Renaissance*, of the *Modern Language Association*, of the *Shakespeare Association of America*, and of the *United Federation of College Teachers*. For several decades he was a renowned contributor to scholarly journals like for example *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, *Shakespeare Survey*, *Shakespeare Quarterly* etc. Furthermore Siegel authored and edited a considerable number of books, chiefly about Shakespeare and the rôle of Christian thought in

him*, his academic specialty, rejecting the then commonly held academic notion that Shakespeare's writing was 'timeless'; Siegel's view was that Shakespeare's plays were the literary expression of the Christian humanist ideology of the new Tudor aristocracy which evolved in the time of Elizabeth I in England. While the Shakespearean studies were in the very centre of Siegel's writing, he also dealt with other authors, like for example John Milton and Arthur Miller; mention should be made, too, of his last book-length work, *The great reversal : politics and art in Solzhenitsyn*, in which he discussed the evolution of the world-renowned Nobel laureate from a distinguished and brilliant critic of the Stalin era in the USSR to a pro-Czarist reactionary.

During the 1960s Siegel became very active in the movement against the Vietnam war which rapidly extended even to academic institutions like the *Modern Language Association*. At that time Siegel began to reconsider his opinion about the *SWP* and to reconcile, a process which eventually ended by rejoining the party in 1978 after retiring from his university job. Several years before he already had become a frequent contributor to the party's theoretical magazine, *International Socialist Review*. He also edited and prefaced some selections of Trotsky's writings on literary subjects which were published by *SWP's* publishing house, *Pathfinder Press***. At the same time he was a close collaborator of George Breitman and George Novack, the two most outstanding intellectuals of the *SWP*. In the early 1980s, however, Siegel sided with an oppositional current within the *SWP* criticizing its drifting away from Trotskyist positions and traditions under the party leadership of Jack Barnes. Siegel left the *SWP* in 1983 together with a considerable number of longtime party members who were bureaucratically expelled. In 1984 he belonged to the founding members of one of those groups which were launched by former *SWP* members, *Socialist Action*. Siegel participated in the national conventions of *Socialist Action* and served as a member of its *Control Commission*. In 1989, together with French historian Pierre Broué, with Trotsky's grandson Esteban Volkov as well as with several members and friends of *Socialist Action*, Siegel participated in the first Trotskyist delegation which was allowed to visit the Soviet Union. In 1993, his booklet *The premature obituary of socialism* was published by Walnut Publ., *Socialist Action's* publishing house. Siegel became co-chairman of the *Moscow Trials Campaign Committee* which was set up in New York to organize an international campaign demanding the rehabilitation of Leon Trotsky and other prominent victims of the Stalinist purges of the 1930s. During the last years of his life Siegel was living alone after his beloved wife Edith has passed away in 1999. The old man remained a dedicated advocate of the cause of Trotskyism to the end, sometimes contributing articles to the *Socialist Action* paper or delivering lectures to comrades and friends.

At the beginning of 2004 an inoperable stomach cancer was diagnosed. He began to compile and annotate a selection of his previously written articles on the subject of Trotsky's legacy and to write an introduction to this compilation. Paul Siegel died at New York City on April 26, 2004. He left his daughter Rosalind and her five children. A memorial service took place on May 22.

* See our selective bibliographies, below.

** For a listing of Siegel's writings on Trotsky see our Trotsky Bibliography, 3. ed., vol. 1-2, Munich [etc.], 1999.

*Selective bibliography**

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

- A critical study guide to Shakespeare's Macbeth / editorial consultant: John T. Shawcross. - Totowa, NJ : Littlefield, Adams, [1968]. - 102 pp. - (ERA key indexed guides ; PQ 144)
- Democracy in America : fact and fiction. - San Francisco, Cal. : Socialist Action, 1987. - 20 pp. - (A Socialist Action pamphlet)
- The gathering storm : Shakespeare's English and Roman history plays ; a Marxist approach. - London : Redwords, 1992. - XXXIV, 204 pp. [Earlier ed. publ. with title: Shakespeare's English and Roman history plays]
- The great reversal : politics and art in Solzhenitsyn. - San Francisco, Cal. : Walnut Publ., 1991. - IV, 198 pp.
- The meek and the militant : religion and power across the world. - London [etc.] : Zed Books, 1986. - XV, 229 pp.
- The premature obituary of socialism. - San Francisco, Cal. : Walnut Publ. Co., 1993. - I, 54 pp.
- Revolution and the 20th-century novel. - New York, NY : Monad Pr., 1979. - 237 pp.
- Shakespeare in his time and ours. - Notre Dame, Ind. [etc.] : Univ. of Notre Dame Pr., 1968. - IX, 200 pp.
- Shakespearean tragedy and the Elizabethan compromise : a Marxist study. - New York, NY : New York Univ. Pr., 1957. - XXII, 243 pp. [and later ed.]
- Shakespeare's English and Roman history plays : a Marxist approach. - Rutherford [etc.] : Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Pr., 1986. - 168 pp. [Later ed. publ. with title: The gathering storm]
- Studies in Elizabethan melancholy. - Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard Univ., 1941. - 360 pp. [His PhD]

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

- The Critical temper : a survey of modern criticism on English and American literature from the beginnings to the twentieth century / Martin Tucker, gen. ed. - 1. - New York, NY : Ungar, 1969. - XXVI, 582 pp.
- His infinite variety : major Shakespearean criticism since Johnson / ed. by Paul N. Siegel. - Philadelphia, Pa. : Lip-pincott, 1964. - XI, 432 pp. - (Preceptor ; P-10) [& later ed.]
- Trotsky, Leon: Art and revolution : writings on literature, politics, and culture / Leon Trotsky. Ed. by Paul N. Siegel. - 2. ed., 4. print. - New York, NY : Pathfinder, 1992. - 252 pp.
- Trotsky, Leon: Leon Trotsky on literature and art / ed. with an introd. by Paul N. Siegel. - New York, NY : Pathfinder Pr., 1970. - 248 pp. [& later ed.]

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

- Against the Current (New York, NY, later: Detroit, Mich.) [ISSN 0739-4853] <TSB 0014>
- The achievement of Isaac Bashaviv Singer / ed. by Marcia Allentuck. With a pref. by Harry T. Moore. - Carbondale, Ill. : Southern Illinois Univ. Pr., 1969. - XIX, 177 pp. - (Crosscurrents : modern critiques)
- The American Socialist (New York, NY) <TSB 0024>
- Cahiers Léon Trotsky (Paris, later: Grenoble; later: Saint Martin d'Hères) [ISSN 0181-0790] <TSB 0277>
- Centennial Review of Arts and Science (East Lansing, Mich.) [ISSN 0162-0177]

* 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.

- Clio (Fort Wayne, Ind.) [ISSN 0884-2043]
 College English (Chicago, Ill.) [ISSN 0010-0994]
 Columbia University Forum (New York, NY) [ISSN 0010-1907] - [ISSN 0884-2556]
 Fourth International (New York, NY, 1940-56) <TSB 0532>
 Gorbachev's U.S.S.R. : is Stalinism dead? A collection of essays in defense of socialist democracy / ed. by Carl Finamore. With contributions by Esteban Volkov [et al.] - San Francisco, Cal. : Walnut Publ. Co., 1989. - XVIII, 171 pp.
 Information Bulletin / Socialist Action (San Francisco, Cal.) <TSB 1493>
 Journal of the History of Ideas (Lancaster, Pa.; later: Philadelphia, Pa.) [ISSN 0022-5037]
 Le Marxisme aujourd'hui (La Tronche; later: Grabels) [ISSN 1157-7762] <TSB 0971>
 The Militant (New York, NY) [ISSN 0026-3885] <TSB 1026>
 New York Literary Forum (New York, NY) [ISSN 0149-1040]
 Notes and Queries for Readers and Writers, Collectors and Librarians (London) [ISSN 0020-3970]
 Publications of the Modern Language Association of America (Baltimore, Md.) [ISSN 0030-8129]
 The Reader's encyclopedia of Shakespeare / ed. by Oscar James Campbell. - New York, NY : Crowell, 1966. - XV, 1014 pp.
 Readings on the Merchant of Venice / Clarice Swisher, ed. - San Diego, Cal. : Greenhaven Pr., 2000. - 203 pp. - (The Greenhaven Press literary companion to British literature)
 The Review of English Studies (Oxford) [ISSN 0034-6551]
 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. - 352 pp.
 Science and Society (New York, NY) [ISSN 0036-8237]
 The Shakespeare Newsletter (New York, NY, later: Kent, Ohio) [ISSN 0037-3214]
 The Shakespeare Quarterly (New York, NY, later: Washington, DC) [ISSN 0037-3222]
 Shakespeare Survey : an annual survey of Shakespeare studies and production (Cambridge) [ISSN 0080-9152]
 Shakespearean comedy / ed. by Maurice Charney. Foreword by Ann Jennalie Cook. - New York, NY : New York Literary Forum, 1980. - XI, 308 pp. - (New York literary forum)
 Shakespeare-Jahrbuch (Weimar) [ISSN 0080-9128]
 Socialist Action (San Francisco) [ISSN 0747-4237] <TSB 1489>
 Studies in Shakespeare / ed. by Arthur D. Matthews and Clark M. Emery. - Coral Gables, Fla. : Univ. of Miami Pr., 1953. - 152 pp. - (University of Miami publications in English and American literature ; 1) [& later ed.]
 Teachers College Record (New York, NY) [ISSN 0040-0475] - [ISSN 0161-4681]
 A tribute to George Breitman : writer, organizer, revolutionary / ed. by Naomi Allen and Sarah Lovell. - New York, NY : Fourth Internationalist Tendency, 1987. - 163 pp.
 Trotsky, Leon: Art and revolution : writings on literature, politics, and culture / Leon Trotsky. Ed. by Paul N. Siegel. - 2. ed., 4. print. - New York, NY : Pathfinder, 1992. - 252 pp.
 Twentieth Century Literary Criticism (New Brunswick, NJ) [ISSN 0031-2525]

• ***Selective bibliography: Articles about Siegel***

- [Anon.]: Siegel, Paul N., in: *The Writers Directory*, 11.1994/96, p. 1143. [Biographical sketch]
 [Anon.]: [Siegel, Paul N., in: *Directory of American scholars : English, speech and drama*, 7. ed., vol. 2.1978, p. 621. [Biographical sketch]
 [Anon.]: Siegel, Paul Noah, in: *Who's who in America*, 40. ed., vol.2.1978/79, p. 2976. [Biographical sketch]
 [Anon.]: Siegel, Paul N., in: *The International Authors and Writers Who's Who*, 8. ed. 1977, p. 940. [Biographical sketch]

- [Anon.]: Siegel, Paul N. 1916- , in: *Contemporary authors*, 37/40.1973, p. 451. [Biographical sketch]
Leiman, Mel: Paul Siegel 1916-2004, in: *Freedom Socialist* <TSB 0553>, 25.2004 (2). [Obituary]
Mackler, Jeff: Paul Siegel 1916-2004 : Marxist scholar and activist / by Jeff Mackler and Cliff Conner, in: *Socialist Action* <TSB 1489>, 2004 (May). [Obituary]
Mackler, Jeff: Paul Siegel 1916-2004 : Marxist scholar and activist / by Jeff Mackler and Cliff Conner, in: *Revolutionary History* <TSB 1375>, 8.2004 (4), pp. 280-285. [Obituary]
Wald, Alan: In memoriam : Paul Siegel, 1916-2004, in: *Against the Current* <TSB 0014>, 19.2004 (3=111), pp. 43-44. [Obituary]
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Sidelines

- A death notice appeared in the New York Times on April 30, 2004 (Late edition - final, Sect. A, Col. 3, p. 25).
- It is said that the book on which he was working at the time of his death will be published posthumously by Socialist Action.
- "With characteristic personal modesty, Paul insisted that his own talents were unexceptional, but that the writing of Marx and Engels, and to some extent Christopher Hill, had allowed him to leave a mark on the world of scholarship. To those of us who had the honor of his friendship and comradeship, Paul Siegel was much more than this. He was an inimitable link in the continuity of U.S. Marxist scholarship and in the tradition of intellectuals allied with the revolutionary socialist movement. We are privileged that he bequeathed such a beautiful legacy of writings for us to read and discuss in years to come." *

W. Lubitz, rev. April 2006

This miscellany is part of

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* Wald, Alan: In memoriam : Paul Siegel, 1916-2004, in: *Against the Current*, 19.2004 (3=111), p.44.