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**Basic biographical data**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Rudolf Klement</b>
<b>Other names (by-names, pseud., etc.):</b>	<b>Adolphe ; Roger Bertrand ; Camille ; Frédéric ; Rudolf Alois Klement ; Lodovic * Ludwig * Nic ; Emile Schmitt ; St. ; Walter Steen ; Theodor ; Théodore ; W.S. ; W. St.</b>
<b>Date and place of birth:</b>	<b>Nov. 4, 1908, Hamburg (Germany)</b>
<b>Date and place of death:</b>	<b>July 14 or 15 (?), 1938, Paris (?) (France)</b>
<b>Nationality:</b>	<b>German</b>
<b>Occupations, careers, etc.:</b>	<b>Student, professional revolutionary, translator</b>
<b>Time of activity in Trotskyist movement:</b>	<b>1932 - 1938 (lifelong Trotskyist)</b>

**Biographical sketch**

*Rudolf Klement was a devoted young Trotskyist who shared the fate of so many members of Trotsky's family and secretarial staff in the 1930s: he fell victim to Stalin's revenge and was murdered by accomplices of the Soviet secret service. This following biographical sketch is chiefly based on the items listed in the final paragraph of the Selective bibliography section below.*

Rudolf (Alois) Klement was born in Hamburg (Germany) on November 4, 1908<sup>1</sup> as son of an architect. After finishing his secondary school education, Klement took up philological studies at various universities in Germany and abroad. It is said that he knew at least five languages, including Russian. As a student, he became a member of the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschland (KPD, Communist Party of Germany)* from which, however, he was expelled in 1932 when he approached Trotskyist positions and was recruited by Georg Jungclas to the Hamburg branch of the *Linke Opposition der KPD, Bolschewiki-Leninisten (LO, Left Opposition of the KPD, Bolshevik-Leninists)*, the German section of the *International Left Opposition (ILO)* inspired by Leon Trotsky and led by his son, Lev Sedov.

Early in 1933, Georg Jungclas, leader of the Hamburg LO group, asked Klement on Trotsky's behalf to go to Büyük Ada (Prinkipo Islands, Turkey), the place where Trotsky lived in exile since 1929, in order to serve to him as secretary, translator, and assistant. Klement agreed and thus he arrived there on

1) In some sources, however, 1910 is given as year of birth.

April 27, 1933, replacing secretaries Jan Frankel<sup>2</sup> and Otto Schüssler<sup>3</sup>. However, Klement's stay at Büyük Ada was quite short since already in July 1933 Trotsky and his wife were allowed to settle in France, admittedly under the stipulation not to visit Paris and not to intervene in French politics. Since the Stalinized French CP as well as rightists, royalists and other reactionary currents and last not least the considerable colony of Russian emigrants living in France, immediately started press campaigns against Trotsky, the latter preferred to live incognito and not to attract attention. Several times, the Trotsky family and the small staff of close collaborators had to move from one town to another. Klement at that time served not only as secretary and translator but also as Trotsky's courier and liaison man, commuting by motorbike between Paris and the place of exile. In April 1934, Klement, on returning from Paris, was arrested by French policemen at Ponthierry because of lacking proper documentation for his motorbike – a banal incident which, however, should cause a lot of trouble for Trotsky since his incognito was exposed and he had to move to another place<sup>4</sup>. Thus, in the end, the incident was used as a pretext for a campaign aiming at Trotsky's expulsion from France, which eventually was ordered in April 1935 but could only be executed in July when Trotsky, his wife and some collaborators left France for Norway.

Klement did not accompany Trotsky to Norway but stayed in Paris, except for some months in 1936/37 when he lived in Brussels, Belgium. After he had participated as a delegate in the so-called *Pre-conference of the Four*<sup>5</sup>, Klement in the following years became – with Trotsky's stern approval and encouraged by Pierre Naville, an influential leader of the French Trotskyists – a central figure in the international Trotskyist scene and one of Trotsky's most eminent collaborators and confidants in the *International Secretariat (IS)*, the leading body) of the *International Communist League (ICL)*<sup>6</sup>, which had succeeded the *International Left Opposition*. Nominated *administrative secretary* of the IS in Summer 1935, Klement soon became almost irreplaceable in that function which included a considerable amount of work as for instance making translations from various languages, keeping the extensive files of the organization, correspondence between the IS and the various national sections as well as with Leon Trotsky and last not least writing, editing and coordinating contributions to a great variety of internal bulletins in various languages. Besides this, Klement's work also included the translating of some writings of Leon Trotsky<sup>7</sup> and contributing articles to the international Trotskyist press<sup>8</sup>. Being an absolutely loyal adherent, spokesman and defender of Trotsky, Klement tirelessly argued and polemicized against those within the movement who were inconsistent with some of the essential positions developed by Trotsky, e.g. against Henk Sneevliet, Georges Vereeken and Raymond Molinier. Suffering from the uncertain and risky status of a political refugee and in view of the violent hostility of the Stalinists towards the Trotskyists, Klement used several pseudonyms which he frequently changed (e.g. Adolphe, Camille, Frédéric, Steen) and lodged under fake names like for example Emile Schmitt (or, Schmidt) and Roger Bertrand.

Klement, in his capacity as administrative secretary, was not only a leading figure of the international Trotskyist structures but at the same time a member of the *Auslandskomitee (AK, Foreign Committee)*

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2) A Czech serving as secretary to Trotsky from April 1930 to January 1933 (and again from June to October 1935, Norway, as well as from February to October 1937, Mexico).

3) A German serving as secretary to Trotsky from Spring 1932 to April 10, 1933 (and again from February 1939 to August 1940, Mexico). Other secretaries on service when Klement was with Trotsky were Jean Van Heijenoort (a multi-lingual Frenchman who served almost seven years to Trotsky as secretary and devoted companion), Sara Weber, and Maria Pevsner. Jean Van Heijenoort some decades later published his reminiscences with title *With Trotsky in exile, from Prinkipo to Coyoacán* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1978) in which he mentioned Klement several dozen times.

4) For some details (based upon Van Heijenoort's account of the matter) see the paragraph *On the 1934 motorbike incident* within the *Sidelines* section below.

5) Three left socialist parties, the Dutch OSP, the Dutch RSP and the German SAP together with Trotsky's ICL signed the so-called *Declaration of the Four*. But the *Bloc of Four* which Trotsky hoped to transform into a nucleus of a new International soon broke up and only the RSP and its successor, the RSAP, joined the international Trotskyist movement, at least for a few years.

6) The ICL was renamed *Movement for the Fourth International* in 1936.

7) See the paragraph *Selective bibliography: Books/pamphlets translated by Klement*, below.

8) E.g. in *Unser Wort, The New International, Quatrième Internationale*. Klement's last major article, titled *Les tâches du prolétariat pendant la guerre*, appeared in the June 1938 issue of *Quatrième Internationale* and was highly appraised by Trotsky.

of the *Internationale Kommunisten Deutschlands (IKD, International Communists of Germany, the German section of the ICL and of the Movement for the Fourth International, respectively)*, created in 1933<sup>9</sup> in order to secure the political leadership of the *IKD* and to maintain liaison with other members and tendencies of the emigration and last but not least with the local Trotskyist underground groups operating in Germany under the very difficult conditions of a fascist dictatorship. Otto Schüssler (pseud.: Oskar Fischer), and his friend and close collaborator Josef Weber (perhaps better known by his pseudonym Johre) were the main leaders and inspirers of the *IKD*. But the *Johre-Fischer* leadership – as this leading duo used to be called by insiders – was challenged again and again by various other German Trotskyist exile leaders who continued to form mini oppositions as for example did Walter Nettelbeck (pseud.: Jan Bur). The *IKD (AK)* was characterized by continuing self-laceration, vitriolic factional struggles and often small-minded personal animosities. In 1937, a struggle for influence flared up between the *Johre-Fischer* group and Rudolf Klement which eventually culminated in the launching of a rival paper<sup>10</sup> issued by Klement, *Der Einzige Weg*.

While by 1938 in the Stalinist USSR almost all real and ostensible Trotskyists as well as most of Trotsky's relatives had been murdered, Stalin's secret service apparatus abroad had started to liquidate Trotskyists and other left-wing opponents, heretics and turncoats. Thus, particularly in Spain, during the civil war, a great number of leftists were murdered by Stalinist squads, including the leader of the *POUM*, Andreu Nin, and Erwin Wolf (pseud.: Braun), one of Trotsky's secretaries. In Paris and other West European places, too, accomplices of Stalin's secret service did their foul work. After the liquidation of the leading Trotskyists Erwin Wolf and Hans David Freund (pseud.: Moulin, Winter) in 1937 and after Trotsky's son, Lev Sedov, had died in February 1938 under quite mysterious circumstances in a Paris hospital (ran by white guardist Russian doctors and probably infiltrated by *NKVD* agents), Klement was the man almost alone responsible for the whole preparatory work with regard to an international conference which was scheduled to proclaim – after years of never ending internal debates and struggles – a new, the *Fourth International (FI)* as favoured by Trotsky since 1933. In midst the preparations for this conference<sup>11</sup>, Klement's suitcase, containing a lot of relevant confidential documents, was stolen in the Paris Metro, and during the Spring and Summer of 1938 several suspicious figures, most likely Stalinist secret service men, turned up close to him, e.g. an ostensible immigrant from Lithuania, using the name Toman, and Jaime Ramón Mercader del Rio Hernández, using the alias name Jacques Mornard - the man who in August 1940 eventually should kill Trotsky in Mexico on Stalin's behalf. Close to Klement was also the notorious Mark Zborowski, known to contemporaneous Trotskyists by his pseudonym Étienne, a man who as a compliant tool of the *NKVD* has been most successfully infiltrating the Trotskyist movement for several years and who even had become a close confident and co-worker of Lev Sedov in Paris<sup>12</sup>. However, it is likely that Klement did not realized the immediate danger threatening his life.

On July 12, 1938, Klement was seen for the last time by some of his French Trotskyist comrades. When a few days later he was missing, they went to his flat where they only found an uneaten meal –

9) At the beginning, the *AK* consisted of E.H. Ackerknecht (Bauer), Otto Schüssler (Fischer), E. Wolf (Braun), Josef Weber (Johre), W. Schmuschkowitz (Schmidt), Samuel Hundert (Lehmann), Paul Kirchhoff (Eiffel), and Artur Goldstein (Stahl); later, the *AK* was joined by Walter Nettelbeck (Bur) and Rudolf Klement.

10) The official mouthpiece of the *IKD* was *Unser Wort*.

11) The founding conference of the *Fourth International*, which eventually took place on September 3, 1939 in Périgny (near Paris), was overshadowed by the recent *NKVD* assassinations. The conference participants elected the victims Lev Sedov, Erwin Wolf and Rudolf Klement as honorary presidents of the gathering.

12) Zborowski's subversive activities as an infiltrator were fully exposed only in the 1950s after he was arrested and tried there as a Soviet spy. He confessed having been an agent provocateur in the Trotskyist movement as well as later a spy in the U.S., but denied having taken any active part in murder and liquidation. However, some historians, e.g. Isaac Deutscher, suggested the possibility that Zborowski and/or Mercader were associated with the murder of Klement and others. Although Leon Trotsky in 1938/39 repeatedly was warned about Zborowski by Trotskyist dissidents like Sneevliet and Vereeken as well as by Victor Serge and last not least by Alexander Orlov, a defector from the Soviet secret service, Trotsky's confidence in Zborowski tragically remained unshakeable. For more details on this subject see for example Alexander, Robert J.: *International Trotskyism : a documentary analysis of the movement*, Durham, NC [etc.], 1991, pp. 283-285 and Konetschny, Leonid Erwin: *Soviet surveillance and infiltration of the Trotskyite movement : from Prinkipo to Coyoacán, Washington, DC*, George Washington Univ., Thesis (M.A.), 1970, pp. 26-66, 124-127.

Rudolf Klement had obviously vanished<sup>13</sup>. On July 16, two French Trotskyist leaders, Pierre Naville and Jean Rous, the Dutch dissident Trotskyist Henk Sneevliet and the Belgian dissident Trotskyist Vereeken simultaneously received copies of a letter the original of which was sent via New York to Trotsky in Mexico, who, however, received it only on August 1. All copies had been posted in Perpignan (Southern France). At a first glance, it seemed that the letter which was dated July 14, handwritten<sup>14</sup> in German and addressed to "Herr Trotzki", was by Klement<sup>15</sup>; it was signed "Frédéric", one of Klement's pseudonyms, but one which he had ceased to use some two years ago. The contents of this letter was a commonplace political pay-off with Trotsky, ostensibly written by a disillusioned follower who became sick and tired of 'Trotskyism' and displaying the entire arsenal of classical Stalinist anti-Trotskyist reproaches and accusations. The facts that a long defunct pseudonym was used and that the letter contained some strange errors in spelling which would have been occurred most unlikely in a letter actually written by Klement, as well as some other details<sup>16</sup> aroused quite considerable suspicion – most likely the letter was a typical falsification fabricated by Soviet secret service men. The mysterious Lithuanian mentioned above significantly enough never again appeared after Klement's vanishing. Klement's family never got any sign of life.

It was only on August 25 that in the waters of river Seine near Meulan a sack was found containing a male trunk with arms; two days later<sup>17</sup>, another sack was fished out river Seine near Garganville containing the legs which had been removed from the trunk with surgical skill. Pierre Naville and Jean Rous identified the corpse as the mortal remains of Rudolf Klement. The head removed from the trunk was never found. The whole story of Klement's vanishing, of the finding of the mortal remains and of the fake pay-off letter has been well documented and researched<sup>18</sup>. Thus it can be taken for sure that Rudolf Klement was kidnapped and murdered by Stalinist agents<sup>19</sup> (perhaps even by men whom he knew) who unfortunately never have been indicted and sentenced<sup>20</sup>. Trotsky dealt with the Klement affair in various letters and articles, e.g.<sup>21</sup>:

– The disappearance of Rudolf Klement. Dated July 18, 1938. [Originally publ. in *Socialist Appeal*, 1938 (July 30)] In: *Writings of Leon Trotsky, [1937-38]*, 2. ed., New York, NY, 1976, p. 385.

13) Under the title *Un nouveau coup du Guépéou en plein Paris : Rudolf Klement (alias Camille) un des secrétaires administratives de la 4<sup>e</sup> Internationale a disparu!* a press release was published by the POI, the French section of the *Movement for the Fourth International* on July 16, 1938.

14) The carbon copies were typed and signed by "Rudolf Klement", the original letter which Trotsky received was handwritten and signed "Frédéric".

15) The original is being preserved at *Houghton Library*, Cambridge, Mass., as document no. 2321 within the famous collection *Exile Papers of Lev Trotskii* (call phrase: bMS Russ 13.1). A facsimile is to be found in *Les crimes du Guépéou : documents sur les assassinats d'Ignace Reiss et de Rudolf Klement*, Paris, 1985, pp. 37-40.

16) See for instance Trotsky, Leon: On the fate of Rudolf Klement, in: *Trotsky, Leon: Writings of Leon Trotsky, [1937-38]*, 2. ed., New York, NY, 1976, pp.401-409 where Trotsky mentions some 18 points indicating that the letter was either a falsification or a forgery. See also Rosenthal's account (Rosenthal, Gérard: *Avocat de Trotsky*, Paris, 1975, pp. 277 sq.)

17) According to Rosenthal (op. cit., p. 281) the legs were found only on Nov. 15, 1938.

18) See for example our bibliographical listing below. More relevant literature is to be found in chapter 6.1 of the *Lubitz' Leon Trotsky Bibliography [ISSN 2190-0133]*. Probably the best summary account of the Klement affair is that given by Gérard Rosenthal in his *Avocat de Trotsky*, Paris, 1975, pp. 175-281.

19) With regard to the motives, Trotsky biographer Isaac Deutscher wrote: "Why did the G.P.U. picked Klement? He had not been outstanding among the Trotskyists for any special ability; but he had been a modest and selfless worker who kept his eyes wide open to what was going on in the organization. It was, we think, he who had urged Trotsky and Natalya to ask Lyova [Sedov] to leave France. Had he recently come into possession of some important G.P.U. secret? Had he been on the track of their *agent provocateur* [Mark Zborowski, alias Étienne], perhaps about to unmask him? This, Trotsky guessed, would plausibly explain why the G.P.U. pounced and why they killed him in so vindictive and cruel a manner" (Deutscher, Isaac: *The prophet outcast, Trotsky 1929-1940*, London, 203, p. 330).

20) The hypothesis of the late Georges Vereeken [see Vereeken, Georges: *Rudolf Klement: an agent? Certainly a coward*, in: *Vereeken, Georges: The GPU in the Trotskyist movement*, London, 1976, pp. 238-318] that Klement himself may have been a Stalinist infiltrator whom his secret service chiefs wanted to get rid of seems a rather absurd emanation of factionalism and probably even personal animosity; see for example Broué, Pierre: *Klement Rudolf, Adolf, Alois dit Adolphe, Camille, Frédéric, W. Steen*, in: *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier français / publié sous la dir. de Jean Maitron*, partie 4, 1914-1939, t. 32, Paris, 1988, pp. 382. In the postface to the German edition of his Trotsky biography, French historian Pierre Broué wrote that "we know from Sudoplatov that the NKVD accomplices Krotkov and Taubman have murdered and dismembered Klement..." (Broué, Pierre: *Trotzki, eine politische Biographie*, Bd. 2, Köln, [2003], p. 1138. [Transl. by W.L.]

21) Note: only English-language versions have been considered here. For French translations see *Trotsky, Léon: Œuvres / publ. sous la dir. de Pierre Broué, tome 18*, [Grenoble], 1984, pp. 144-145, 149, 215-216, 218-230, 306-307. Two hitherto unpublished letters of Trotsky addressed to an aunt of Klement were published in French in *Cahiers Léon Trotsky*, 1979 (1), pp. 76-77.

- A 'letter' from Rudolf Klement. Dated Aug. 1, 1938. [Originally publ. in *Socialist Appeal*, 1938 (Aug. 13) In: *Writings of Leon Trotsky, [1937-38]*, 2. ed., New York, NY, 1976, pp. 399-400.
- On the fate of Rudolf Klement. Dated Aug. 3, 1938. [Originally publ. in *Socialist Appeal*, 1938 (Aug. 20 with title: *Trotsky brands 'Klement letter' as GPU forgery*] In: *Writings of Leon Trotsky, [1937-38]*, 2. ed., New York, NY, 1976, p. 401-409.  
Also publ. in Russian with title *Po povodu sud'by Rudol'fa Klementa*, in: *Biulleten' Oppozitsii (Bol'sheviki-Lenintsev)*, 10.1938 (68/69), pp. 25-28.
- The assassination of Rudolf Klement. Dated Sept. 20, 1938. [Originally publ. in *Lutte ouvrière*, 1938 (Sept. 30)] In: *Writings of Leon Trotsky, [1938-39]*, 2. ed., New York, NY, 1974, pp. 24-25.
- On the murder of Rudolf Klement. Dated Dec. 1, 1938. [Originally publ. in *Biulleten' Oppozitsii (Bol'sheviki-Lenintsev)*, 11.1939 (73)] In: *Writings of Leon Trotsky, [1938-39]*, 2. ed., New York, NY, 1974, pp. 137.

### *Selective bibliography* <sup>22</sup>

- ***Selective bibliography: Books/pamphlets translated by Klement***

- Sedov, Lev L'vovich: Rotbuch über den Moskauer Prozeß / Dokumente, gesammelt und red. von L. Sedow. Übers. aus dem Russ., verb. an Hand der franz. Ausg., vom Autor erg. - Antwerpen : de Lee, [1937]. - 119 pp. [& later ed., publ. by Spartakus, Hamburg and by ISP-Verl., Frankfurt a.M.]
- Trotsky, Leon: Ihre Moral und unsere / Leo D. Trotzki. [Hrsg. u. Nachw.: Bernward Vesper. Übers. von Rudolf Klement]. - Berlin, 1967. - 81 pp. - (Voltaire-Flugschriften; 8)
- Trotsky, Leon: Verratene Revolution : was ist die U.S.S.R. und wohin treibt sie? / Leo Trotzki. Übers. aus dem russ. Ms. von Walter Steen [i.e. Rudolf Klement]. - Antwerpen : de Lee [etc.], 1937. - 305 pp. [& later ed., publ. by various publishing houses]
- Trotsky, Leon: Die 4. Internationale und die USSR : die Klassennatur des Sowjetstaates / Leo Trotzki. Übers.: Walter Steen [i.e. Rudolf Klement]. - Prag : Kopp, 1933. - 23 pp. [& later ed.]

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

- Bulletin de la Ligue des Communistes-Internationalistes (Bolcheviks-Léninistes) (Amsterdam) <TSB 0178>
- Bulletin intérieur / Parti Socialiste Révolutionnaire (Bruxelles ?) <TSB 1174>
- Bulletin intérieur de la LCI (Amsterdam) <TSB 0225>
- Bulletin intérieur du Groupe Bolchevik-Léniniste de la SFIO (anciennement Ligue Communiste) (Paris) <TSB 0231>
- Bulletin intérieur international / Secrétariat International pour la IVe Internationale (Anvers) <TSB 1069>
- Der Einzige Weg : Zeitschrift für die Vierte Internationale (Antwerpen) <TSB 0457>
- Information Bulletin / International Bureau for the Fourth International (New York, NY) <TSB 1070>
- Inneres Bulletin der Internationalen Kommunistischen Liga (Bolschewiki-Leninisten) (Paris) <TSB 0645>
- Internal Bulletin / Socialist Workers Party (New York, NY) <TSB 1548>
- International Internal Bulletin / International Secretariat for the Fourth International (S.I.) <TSB 1071>
- International News / Left Wing Group, Workers Party USA (New York, NY) <TSB 0704>
- Internes internationales Bulletin / Internationales Sekretariat für die Vierte Internationale (S.I.) <TSB 0770>
- The New International (New York, NY, 1934-36 and 1938-58) <TSB 1089>
- Quatrième Internationale (Paris) <TSB 1281>
- Revolutionary History (London) [ISSN 0953-2382] <TSB 1375>
- Service d'information et de presse pour la Quatrième Internationale (Paris) <Paris ; Anvers) <TSB 1469>
- Trotskyist International (London) [ISSN 0953-7554] <TSB 1737>
- Unser Wort (Prag, later: Paris; later: Antwerpen; later: New York, NY) <TSB 1761>

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<sup>22</sup> 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.



• **Selective bibliography: Books and articles about Klement**

- [Anon.]: Comrade Klement kidnapped, in: *Workers' International News* <TSB 1840>, 1.1938 (8), pp. 1-2.
- [Anon.]: Das neue G.P.U.-Verbrechen in Paris : die Entführung des Genossen Rudolf Klement, in: *Unser Wort* <TSB 1761>, 6.1938 (4/5=88/89), pp. 2-3.
- [Anon.]: L'enlèvement de Rudolf Klement / par un témoin, in: *La Révolution prolétarienne*, 1938 (278).
- [Anon.]: On the anniversary of Rudolf Klement's assassination, in: *Fourth International* <TSB 0532>, 5.1944 (7=46), pp. 202-203.
- [Anon.]: [Rudolf Klement](#). [Biographical sketch, Wikipedia article]
- Broué, Pierre: Quelques proches collaborateurs de Trotsky, in: *Cahiers Léon Trotsky* <TSB 0277>, 1979 (1), pp. 61-85 [about Klement: pp. 73-75] [Biographical sketch]
- Broué, Pierre: [Rudolf Klement](#) [Electronic resource] / övers.: Martin Fahlgren. - 34 KB (3 pp.)
- Broué, Pierre: Rudolf Klement, in: *Revolutionary History* <TSB 1375>, 1.1988 (1), pp. 16-17. [Biographical sketch, originally publ. in: *Cahiers Léon Trotsky*, 1979 (1)]
- Broué, Pierre: Klement Rudolf, Adolf, Alois dit Adolphe, Camille, Frédéric, W. Steen, in: *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier français / publié sous la dir. de Jean Maitron*, partie 4, 1914-1939, t. 32, Paris, 1988, pp. 381-382. [Biographical sketch]
- Broué, Pierre: [Klement Rudolf, Adolf, Alois dit Adolphe, Camille, Frédéric, W. Steen](#) [Electronic resource] [Biographical sketch, updated 2015]
- Dannat, Anton: Klement, Rudolf (1908-1938), in: *Dannat, Anton: Auf dem Floß der Medusa? Die französischen Trotzkisten 1924-1939*, Wien, 1997 (=Marxismus <Wien> ; 11), pp. 320-321 [Biographical sketch]
- Documents sur l'assassinat de Rudolf Klement, in: *Les crimes du Guépéou : documents sur les assassinats d'Ignace Reiss et de Rudolf Klement*, Paris, 1985, pp. 34-58. (Les cahiers du C.E.R.M.T.R.I. ; 37) [Containing a facsimile of the fake Klement letter of July 14, 1938 and various reprints from the contemporaneous press, etc.]
- Joubert, Jean-Paul: Quand l'Humanité couvrait les traces des tueurs, in: *Cahiers Léon Trotsky* <TSB 0277>, 1979 (3), pp. 203-226. [Particularly pp. 218-226: *L'affaire Klement*]
- Naville, Pierre: Sur l'assassinat de Rudolf Klement (1938) : avec deux lettres inédites de Trotsky, in: *Cahiers Léon Trotsky* <TSB 0277>, 1979 (2), pp. 73-77.
- Rosenthal, Gérard: Rudolf Klement, in: *Rosenthal, Gérard: Avocat de Trotsky*, Paris, 1975, pp. 275-281.
- Simkin, John: [Rudolf Klement](#). [Biographical sketch, electronic resource]
- Trotsky, Leon: Po povodu sud'by Rudol'fa Klementa / L. Trotskii, in: *Biulleten' Oppozitsii (Bol'sheviki-Leninsevi)* <TSB 0102>, 10.1938 (68/69), pp. 25-28.
- Trotsky, Leon: [Various letters, statements, etc. relating to the case of Rudolf Klement], in: *Trotsky, Leon: Writings, 1937-38*, 2. ed., New York, NY, 1976, pp. 385, 399-409 and in: *ibid.*, 1938-39, 2. ed. 1974, New York, NY, 1974, pp. 24-25, 137. [See also our listing at the end of the bibliographical sketch above]
- Trotsky, Leon: [Various letters, statements, etc. relating to the case of Rudolf Klement], in: *Trotsky, Léon: Œuvres / publ. sous la dir. de Pierre Broué, tome 18*, [Grenoble], 1984, pp. 144-145, 149, 215-216, 218-230, 306-307. [Including rich annotations on the Klement affair by Pierre Broué]
- Vereeken, Georges: Rudolf Klement: an agent? Certainly a coward, in: *Vereeken, Georges: The GPU in the Trotskyist movement*, London, 1976, pp. 238-318.
- Vereeken, Georges: Rudolf Klement: agent? Certainement un lâche, in: *Vereeken, Georges: La guépéou dans le mouvement trotskiste*, Paris, 1975, pp. 244-321.

*Note:* More information about Rudolf Klement is likely to be found in some of the books, pamphlets, university works, and articles listed in the relevant chapter(s) of the [Lubitz' Leon Trotsky Bibliography \[ISSN 2190-0183\]](#), e.g. in chapters [6.1](#), [7.2.03](#), and [7.5.08](#).

## *Sidelines, notes on archives*

### — Notes on archives

While – according to Pierre Broué<sup>23</sup> – the dossier about Klement's assassination was taken away from the Paris police department's archives by the German occupation forces during WW II and never re-appeared, Klement's activities as Trotsky's secretary and as administrative secretary of the *Movement for the Fourth International* are well documented in those archives which preserve the papers of Leon Trotsky, his son, Lev Sedov, and of the international bodies of the contemporaneous Trotskyist movement:

a very considerable number of Klement's letters (letters exchanged between him and Trotsky as well as between him and third parties), memoranda, reports etc. can be traced within one of the most eminent Trotsky archival collections, the *Leon Trotsky exile papers* (MS Russ 13.1), forming part of the famous *Trotsky Archives* at *Houghton Library*, Cambridge, Mass. The material relevant to Rudolf Klement has been partly listed in the register of the *Exile Papers* as so-called *secretarial correspondence*<sup>24</sup>; the documents relevant to Klement are numbered 1149, 2107, 2217-2322, 6675-6687, 7793, 8643-8674, 9025, 9892, 11485-11487, 11797-11802, 12385, 12709-12712, 12716, 13177-13179, 14271, 14479, 14688, 14688, 14852-14866, 14959, 15114, 15172, 15283, 15636, 16965-16968. The famous fake letter (ostensibly written by Klement, signed 'Frédéric' and addressed to "Herr Trotzki" [mentioned above in our biographical sketch]) dated July 14, 1938, together with Trotsky's annotations/under-linings and with the original envelope is preserved as document no. 2321.

Several dozen letters exchanged between Lev Sedov and Rudolf Klement, dating chiefly from 1936 to 1938, and a portion of other archival items are to be found within another well-known Trotsky archive, the *Trotskii-Sedov Papers* (*series 231 of the Boris I. Nicolaevsky Collection*) which are housed in the *Hoover Institution Archives* (Stanford, Cal.)

### — Note on Klement's personality and appearance

Unfortunately, relatively little first-hand account is known about Klement's personality, his character, and his appearance. However, Gérard Rosenthal and Georges Vereeken who had got acquainted with him in the 1930s and several decades later have extensively written about his case, gave quite different impressions<sup>25</sup>.

### — On the 1934 motorbike incident<sup>26</sup>

What follows is the essence of Jean Van Heijenoort's account of Klement's unfortunate motorbike incident of April 12, 1934, which caused some major trouble with regard to Trotsky's sojourn in French exile:

"Although the Sûreté Générale had not informed the local authorities of Trotsky's presence in Barbizon, the household in the *Ker Monique* villa was so different from an ordinary French family that by January 1934 it had attracted the attention of the French gendarmes, alerted by gossip [...] On April 12, 1934, at eleven in the evening, Rudolf Klement was returning to Barbizon on a motorbike, having spent the day in Paris [...] Two gendarmes stopped him on the pretext that the headlight was out of order. They asked him for the registration card of the motorbike. This card was not in his name but, I think, in mine. They charged him with using a stolen motorbike. Klement was carrying letters from all

23) Broué, Pierre: Klement Rudolf, Adolf, Alois dit Adolphe, Camille, Frédéric, W. Steen, in: *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier français / publié sous la dir. de Jean Maitron*, partie 4, 1914-1939, t. 32, Paris, 1988, p. 382

24)"The secretarial correspondence is essentially an extension of Lev Trotskii's correspondence. Several of the letters, however, provide information on Trotskii's day to day life, particularly in Coyoacán, available nowhere else in the collection." [cited from: *The exile papers of Lev Trotskii*, vol. 2, Cambridge, Mass., The Houghton Library, 1975, p. 398.]

25) For details see their works already mentioned above: Rosenthal, Gérard: *Avocat de Trotsky*, Paris, 1975, pp. 275 sq. and Vereeken, Georges: *The GPU in the Trotskyist movement*, London, 1976, pp.238-318, particularly pp. 238-239.

26) Already mentioned within the context of our biographical sketch above.

over the world and many foreign newspapers. He could not clearly explain who he was and where he was going, and he spoke French with a heavy German accent. All this was more than enough to make him suspect, and the gendarmes arrested him. [...] It was obvious from the letters seized, that Trotsky was involved. So [...] the Melun district attorney telephoned the Ministry of the Interior to inquire about the conditions of Trotsky's sojourn in France. He was told that Trotsky was in France on a perfectly regular visa, but that he was supposed to be in Corsica. [...] On April 14 in the morning, the Melun district attorney arrived at the *Ker Monique* villa, accompanied by gendarmes, Klement in handcuffs, and a clerk, in order to interrogate Trotsky about the affair of the motorbike. The charge of theft could not, of course, be maintained. [...] Whatever may have been the exact reasons behind the official's report that Trotsky should have been in Corsica, the French Government seized the opportunity. It took advantage of this local incident, which it had perhaps not wanted but was now quite happy to exploit, in order to modify the conditions of Trotsky's residence in France. [...] Everybody began shouting that Trotsky should have been in Corsica. The press launched a hysterical campaign. The newspapers demanded that Trotsky 'go back' to Corsica, where he had never been, or that more stringent measures be taken against him."<sup>27</sup>

— **A quotation from a *Fourth International* article *On the anniversary of Rudolf Klement's assassination*:**

"[...] On July 12, 1938, comrade Rudolf Klement disappeared. A few days later, the carbon copy of a letter allegedly sent by Klement to Leon Trotsky made its appearance in Paris. The letter purported to be a statement breaking with the Fourth International because of its "objective collaboration with the fascists". It was signed "Rudolf Klement" in the typewritten text and countersigned with his "illegal" pen-name! An odd procedure! The crudeness of the forgery pointed to the cause of the disappearance: the valiant young International Secretary had been kidnapped by agents of Stalin's G.P.U. For many weeks it was believed, because the letter had been postmarked from Perpignan on the French border in the Pyrenees, that comrade Rudolf had been carried off into the Stalinist terror dungeons of Loyalist Spain. Then, in September, his mutilated body was dragged up from River Seine. [...]"<sup>28</sup>

— **Appendix** (available as [PDF file](#)), depicting page 1 of the letter ostensibly written by Klement on July 14, 1938. The original of this letter (4 leaves) is being preserved at *Houghton Library*, Cambridge, Mass. (see above), a copy is being preserved at *CERMTRI*, Paris (our reproduction is from the *CERMTRI* copy), the under-linings are by Trotsky.

*Note: The photograph on p. 1 has been taken from Vereeken, Georges: The GPU in the Trotskyist movement, London, 1976.*

Wolfgang and Petra Lubitz, 2005  
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<sup>27</sup>) Van Heijenoort, Jean: With Trotsky in exile : from Pinkipo to Coyoacán, Cambridge, Mass. [etc.], pp. 64-65. — In the evening of April 15, Trotsky and his wife as well as some of his secretaries clandestinely left Barbizon for Lagny. However, the days of his exile in France were numbered ...

<sup>28</sup>) *Fourth International* (New York, NY), 5.1944 (7=46), pp. 202-203 (quotation is from p. 202).