

# Killer Used Many Nationalities and Names

[Chicago Tribune Press Service]

MEXICO CITY, May 6 —

Little more is known now about the man who murdered Leon Trotsky than was known 20 years ago when the assassin was seized in the exiled Russian leader's fortress-like home after he had given Trotsky a fatal blow with a pickax.

This means that next to nothing is known about him, for his identity was never established with certainty and he never talked or wrote about his crime.

## Red Agent: Trotsky

Whether he was a hired assassin or a man with a personal grievance remains an open question. The dying Trotsky expressed a belief the slayer was a member of the Russian secret police sent



Jacques Mornard

to kill him by his arch enemy, Josef Stalin.

Mexico put him on trial under the name of Jacques Mornard but it was tacitly admitted by officials that the name was fictitious. At the time of his arrest he was using the name of Jacques Mortan Vandendreichd. He said he was 36 and a native of Iran. He has been variously known as Frank Jackson and as Salvador Torkof.

## Theory on Origin

Some investigators came up with the theory he might be Ramon Mercador del Rio, son of Eustasia Maria Cariad Mercado del Rio, a communist heroine of the Spanish

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# Mystery Still Cloaks Assassin of Trotzky

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Civil war, who once received the Order of Lenin.

## Known by Victim

The slayer's real name scarcely matters any more. The one thing known for sure about the man is that he killed Trotzky, and that Trotzky knew him well enough to admit him and give him the chance.

Trotzky's home was in Coyocacan, a suburb of Mexico City. It was a two-story, 15-room brick home with reinforced walls and doors. It had a single entrance from the outside, guarded 24 hours a day. Trotzky had several bodyguards of his own. The Mexican police supplied others.

Mexico had given Trotzky asylum in 1939 after the former partner of Lenin had wandered around Europe for 12 years seeking sanctuary. Both France and Norway had asked him to move on. For his first two years in Mexico, Trotzky occupied a home placed at his disposal by Diego Riviera, the artist. The two quarreled and Trotzky moved out.

## Trotzky Dodged Bullets

Armed men in fake police and military uniforms tried to kill Trotzky in the Coyocacan home in May, 1940. They sprayed Trotzky's bedroom with bullets from the outside but Trotzky, sprawled on the floor, escaped injury.

The assassin showed up on Aug. 20, 1940, wearing a raincoat under which he concealed a pickax. Guards passed him in on Trotsky's orders. They overheard the assassin who was known to Trotsky as Frank Jackson, a leader in the Trotsky movement in the United States, ask Trotsky to examine something he had written. The two men entered Trotsky's study.

Guards said they next heard terrible cries and the sounds of a struggle. They rushed in to pull the assassin from the fallen Trotsky, who was still conscious but had suffered a wound which fractured his skull and exposed his brain. Mrs. Natalia Trotsky, the exile's second wife, was with him when he died less than 24 hours later.

## Sentenced to Life

The Mexican government put the killer on trial as Mornard. He was defended by a Mexico City attorney, Octavio Medellin Ostos, who never revealed where his fee came from. Mornard was sentenced to life imprisonment which is regarded as 20 years.

There were reports that Mornard lived a life of luxury in prison, receiving large sums of money at frequent intervals from an unknown source. Money means a lot to an inmate of a Mexican prison

who can use it to furnish his cell, hire other convicts to clean it, and send out for choice food.

Prison officials denied that Mornard either had money or was receiving money. They said he lived the simple life of an ordinary convict, eating prison fare.

## Visited by Woman

He had a cell about 6 by 8 feet, furnished with a bed, table, chair, and a bookshelf, it was said. The cell had a small porch, tin roofed, where there was a wash basin. There was a small yard where the prisoner could exercise.

An attractive Mexican woman visited him once a week after he made her acquaintance following his first three years in prison. She is Roquelia Mendoza, a government typist earning about \$50 a month. Reportedly she met Mornard when visiting the prison with a sister, whose husband was an inmate.

Mexican law allows prisoners what is called a "conjugal visit" one afternoon a week. The visitor may be either a wife or girl friend.

## Never Asked Parole

After Mornard had been in prison for 12 years he became eligible to apply for parole but did not do so.

His lawyer, Medellin Ostos, told a correspondent for THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE that Mornard was not anxious to have the case pushed.

Officials hinted that Mornard was content to remain in prison because of the safety factor. If released, those who hired him as a killer, if he was a hired killer, might seek to put him out of the way, it was said. In any event, many friends of Trotzky would be eager to kill him for revenge.

## Gave Rare Interview

Mornard was seen in the prison in June, 1953, by a TRIBUNE correspondent. It was one of the few times that any member of the press saw him after he began serving his term.

Mornard was affable but uncommunicative. He came to a peephole and announced with a smile that it would be useless to ask him questions.

"I won't answer, nothing at all," he said, speaking in French.