

LEON TROTSKY CURSED

BY FATHER Trail of Terrorist



LEON TROTSKY WITH HIS WIFE IN MEXICO.

By BERNARD O'DONNELL

THAT Leon Trotsky should have perished at the hand of an assassin who had professed friendship is ironic justice. For in his time he had, through his agents, murdered political opponents to whom he had obtained access by pretending friendship for them.

Since the days of Ivan the Terrible no man was more ferocious in his dealings with those who did not see eye to eye with him, and it is fitting, perhaps, that for years he should have lived in fear of a fate which he had meted out to thousands in the days when he wielded a power such as Hitler wields to-day.

From the time he escaped from a Siberian prison before he was 20 he has lived a hunted, dangerous life. It was then that he abandoned his Jewish name of Bronstein.

There was nothing of loyalty in the heart of Trotsky. Even to his wife, who schemed and plotted with him, bore him children, and went to Siberia at his side, he was disloyal, for after she had aided him in his escape he deserted her and went to the woman who is now known as Mme. Trotsky.

AT THE ALTAR

In 1917 he was in the States when news of the Tsar's overthrow brought him back to Russia to engineer the coup which placed Lenin in power. A brilliant orator and a dominant personality, he whipped up the Red soldiers to enthusiasm—and ruthlessly imposed upon them a discipline more brutal than that of Tsardom! Such was his reign of terror that even his own father, Moses Bronstein, denounced him to the Synagogue.

No more dramatic scene has ever been witnessed than that of the old man, straggling grey curls poking from beneath his black cap, his hands clasping the traditional prayer straps, being led to the altar by his sons.

In a trembling voice he charged his son with forswearing the creed of his forefathers, being an enemy of Judaism, and "the curse of humanity."

Asked for proofs, the old man cried aloud: "Every member of this community is a witness—every Russian—the whole world."

And then, with his frail arm cleaving the air, the father of Trotsky demanded that his son be damned and cursed with the curse of damnation which, since the world began, is spoken only against the enemies of God—the curse of which there is no redemption, neither on earth, nor in hell, nor in heaven."

A rabbi stepped forward with a shofar (sacred trumpet), and blew towards the east, west, south, and north, exclaiming after each blast: "Hear, Israel, hear. This is the name of thy foe," and repeating the charge and the curse.

THE EXILE

Egotist, and with an insatiable ambition, Trotsky was absolute ruler of the army. He did not hesitate to get Tsarist officers of the old regime back into the army to knock it into shape. He did not hesitate to use the army for his own—and Lenin's—personal advancement and profit.

But when Lenin died things altered, for Stalin had not been slow to take advantage of Trotsky's preoccupation with the army to plot against him. At length came the day when Trotsky was exiled, first to a distant part of Russia, and then to any country that would consent to give him sanctuary.

He was not only exiled by the very people he had led; he was hunted by them—hunted from one place to another, what time he denounced Stalin and the present Russian Government and tried to work up a revolutionary organization which one day would overthrow his rival.

Attempts were made on his life, but he survived them all.

Five years ago he reached Mexico. There, in a lonely villa guarded by a dozen detectives, and

attended by three secretaries, this man who poured scorn on the plutocrats, who battered on the wealth garnered by the workers, lived a life of luxury, although in constant dread that the long arm of the OGPU should get him.

One of the highest-paid writers in the world, he contributed to the American newspapers and magazines. He was paid fabulous sums to broadcast.

His friends were carefully chosen, but—not carefully enough.

BLONDE SYLVIA

One of them, named Van den Drenschd, a secret service agent of the Soviet, wormed his way into the confidence of Trotsky through a young and lovely blonde named Sylvia Ageloff, his sweetheart, and sister of one of Trotsky's former secretaries.

Frank Jackson is the name by which Van den Drenschd has been known since he became a naturalized American, and he is said to have confessed that he killed Trotsky because the OGPU had threatened to kill his mother if he didn't.

Jackson had ready access to Trotsky, and it was during one of his visits that he struck the Russian two savage blows on the head with an alpenstock. He then produced a revolver and was about to complete the job when Harold Robbins, one of the secretaries, entered the room and knocked him senseless.

Trotsky was rushed to hospital. Two brain specialists and surgeons flew to examine him, but it was hopeless from the first. Almost his last words were: "I think Stalin has finished the job he started."

Jackson and Miss Ageloff have both been detained in connection with the murder, which the police fear will involve international relations.

BERNARD O'DONNELL.