
Where is Juliet Stuart Poyntz?

by Carlo Tresca †

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The arrest in Moscow of Mr. and Mrs. A.A. Rubens, alias Donald L. Robinson and Ruth Norma Robinson in December [1937] has led to a Federal Grand Jury investigation. It has been proven that the “Robinsons” used fraudulent American passports.

At the beginning, the inquiry led to the office of former County Clerk Albert Marinelli, where the applications for the passports had been certified. Mr. Marinelli is a target for various accusations. Consequently, popular reaction was at first rather simple: the investigation must have something to do with a vulgar political racket. In fact, however, the case is complex and political.

A series of articles by Herbert Solow in the *New York Sun*, *The New Leader*, and elsewhere have established that the passports were obtained through the aid of members and friends of the Communist Party. They were cooperating in the plan to stage in Moscow a trial which would aim to demonstrated by means of confession made by Rubens and other GPU agents that all Stalinist opponents in the United States were Japanese spies. The object would be to discredit labor opposition to Stalin and to stimulate a spy scare and war fever.

It is the Rubens case which forms the background for the disappearance of Juliet Stuart Poyntz.

Miss Poyntz was for years an outstanding

Stalinist leader. In 1934 she retired from public political activity. She became a GPU agent. Witnesses are available who know her through her work as an agent of the GPU. As late as 1936 she was seen in Moscow in the company of George Mink. George Mink is a GPU agent. He has worked for the Cheka in Barcelona and has served a prison sentence in Denmark as a Russian spy.

This is the same George Mink, member of the Communist Party of America, whom I have accused in the last issue of *Il Martello* of having organized, directed, and participated in the assassination of Camillo Berneri in Barcelona on May 6, 1937.

Although we differed politically, Miss Poyntz was a personal friend of mine for twenty years. In May 1937, I met her on the street and at that time she told me that she had become disgusted with the Soviet regime and the Communist Party in this country. Her attitude was known to the Stalinists. They had reason to fear her because she might break with them and disclose secret matter.

About a year ago, Miss Poyntz took a room, in the American Women’s Association headquarters. She was seen by friends as late as June 4 or 5, 1937. She has never been seen since.

Shortly after the Rubens case was first discussed in the press, The New York World-Telegram revealed that Miss Poyntz was missing and

†- Carlo Tresca was an Italian-American syndicalist and labor activist who was a key organizer of Italian-speaking workers for the IWW during the first decades of the 20th Century. He was assassinated in the United States in 1943, purportedly by agents of Mussolini. Tresca spells the name of Juliet S. Poyntz as “Pointz” throughout the course of this article.

that she had left her room some seven months earlier in such condition as to lead her friends to think she had intended to return within a few hours. Her attorney, also an old friend, subsequently confessed these facts. He stated his conviction that her absence was involuntary.

It is my belief that the Russian secret police were seeking to put Miss Poyntz out of the way as they have put out of the way Ignace Reiss and other discontented secret agents. Her disappearance was essential to the handling of the Robinson-Rubens case. Moreover, if she could be produced in Moscow, the fact that she had a German husband might be used to “enrich” the testimony in that case. She would be in a position to “confess” that she had often gone to the German consulate (she was suing for her dead husband’s estate) and that she had met Rubens.

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I am convinced that an effort was made to recall or kidnap Miss Poyntz to Moscow, and that, if it wasn’t found necessary to kill her during the efforts, she was, in fact, taken to Moscow.

One man could give much valuable information about this case. His name is Shachno Epstein, agent of the GPU.†

On the outbreak of the Revolution, Epstein was an editor of *Gerechtigkeit*, Jewish organ of the International Ladies’ Garment Workers Union. Miss Poyntz was then in the union’s educational department. They were intimate friends. Epstein went to Russia. On the capture of Odessa by the Bolsheviks in 1918, he was in a difficult situation. He escaped it by joining the Bolshevik Party. He became an informer against his own comrades.

About 1933 [*sic.*] he was sent to the United States as an agent of the Communist International, under the name of Joseph Berson.

A short time after his arrival, the Communists began publishing the *Freiheit*, with Epstein as editor. Two or three years later he was recalled to Russia.

Suspected of Trotskyist sympathies, he was exiled to a remote part of Russia around 1928. He repented and was permitted to return to Moscow. Sycophantic and servile, he became an agent of the GPU, the Stalin secret police, as the price of his life and liberty.

After 1928, he was in the United States at various intervals as an agent of the GPU and the Communist International, under the name of Joseph Berson. There are several witnesses who saw him in New York in May 1937, shortly before Miss Poyntz’s disappearance. I saw them together at the end of May of that year, a week before she vanished. He sailed for Europe on the *Queen Mary* on August 11, 1937.

A New York newspaper has stated that the man I named to the Federal Grand Jury which subpoenaed me, is the man I accuse of managing the disappearance of Miss Poyntz. I named a man to the Grand Jury. I named nobody to the press. I can add nothing in the way of names at this time. I am not permitted to repeat what I said to the Grand Jury. I can only say that as far as I know Epstein has not filed any libel suit against the paper that named him, nor has he even protested, nor has the Stalinist Party given any explanation of its behavior. Indeed, the whole attitude of the Communist Party in this matter is amazing. When my first charges were published, the Stalinists called me an agent of Mussolini. They did not

†- Shachno Epstein was a leader of Jewish Federation of the Socialist Party of America prior to WWI. Having returned to Russia after the Revolution, he was there selected by Nicholas Hourwich (CPA) and Max Bedacht (UCP) as the non-partisan chairman of the May 1921 unity convention held in Woodstock, New York. It is not clear whether he arrived in the United States in time to serve in this role. During this period, Epstein made use of the pseudonym “Arthur Staley” and he stayed on for a time as a representative of the Comintern in the United States. Epstein was a member of the of Jewish Editorial Committee in 1921 and a delegate to 1922 Bridgman Convention that brought unity between the CPA and the Central Caucus faction. Back in the USSR, Epstein went on to serve as a leading figure in Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in USSR. He died in 1945 of natural causes.

dare mention in their organs the subject of my charges. They are quick to protest about almost anything. A woman who was their leader for more than 15 years has disappeared. Her attorney says her disappearance was involuntary. For a time after the news came out, the Stalinists pretended that they had no contact with her since 1934 and they make no protest about her disappearance.

Her attorney concealed her disappearance for seven months. A newspaper learned of it by accident. Only after the news was in the paper did he go to the police. The same attorney says I am given to "romancing." He doesn't deny the possibility that I am right. He doesn't dispute my concrete statements. If I am right, the Federal kidnapping law has been violated. But the Federal Jury of Investigation is conducting no investigation. None of Miss Poyntz's friends or her attorney has made a complain on which an investigation could be based.

If I am right, New York State laws have been

violated. But the state police do nothing and the city police take the whole affair rather casually.

If I am right, a political crime has been committed. To put it mildly, Miss Poyntz's civil liberties have been somewhat infringed. But the American Civil Liberties Union, whose directors know her very well, makes no protest and *The Nation* and *The New Republic*, some of whose editors know her and all of whom are presumably opposed to infringements of civil liberties, even when it takes the form of kidnapping, say nothing. I have not made a single statement which is unsupported by witnesses. Nobody has attempted to refute a single one of my concrete statements, and I ask again:

"Where is Juliet Stuart Poyntz?"

This is no ordinary crime any more than the Robinson-Rubens case is an ordinary passport fraud. This is a political crime of great interest to the American public.

Edited footnotes by Tim Davenport.

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