

Passport to Murder

By W. Rodney

A few facts about an incident
in recent history in which a
document of Canadian origin
played an important part.

Part I

THIRTEEN years ago, on Aug. 20, 1940, in a suburb of Mexico City, an assassin buried a climber's pick deep into the massive head of Leon Trotsky. The old Bolshevik, one of the great driving forces of the Russian Revolution, died the following day. The murderer, despite a severe beating administered by Trotsky's body-guard, survived, and on Apr. 16, 1943, was sentenced to the maximum penalty permitted by the Mexican law—20 years' imprisonment. From the time of the murder, throughout the period of detention, trial and subsequent imprisonment, despite constant questioning and the assistance of all of the aids, techniques and devices available for modern criminal investigation, the killer's real identity remained a mystery. The only clue was the name Frank Jacson, found in a Canadian passport, one of the two items in the assassin's possession at the time of the murder. The other item was a typewritten confession. When positive identification was finally established, it was the result

of one man's particular interest in the case: of long patient, and methodical work by Dr. Alfonso Quiroz, now Chief of Investigations for the Bank of Mexico.

Directly after the murder, for over six months, Quiroz, who was then Professor of Criminology at the University of Mexico City, questioned Jacson and co-related the numerous psychological tests that the killer underwent. The results, although highly interesting and suggestive, did not establish the man's identity. Despite the initial failure to establish the murderer's real identity, Dr. Quiroz, who by then had become greatly interested in the case, continued his investigations. Years later, after attending the International Criminology Congress held in Paris in the autumn of 1950, Dr. Quiroz travelled to Barcelona, Spain. There, by means of fingerprints, he was able to prove conclusively that Frank Jacson was really Ramon Mercador del Rio, born in Barcelona on Feb. 7, 1913. Actually it was largely accidental that del Rio's real identity was on police records,