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Storm the Skies

Asaltar los cielos

SPAIN 1996, 98 min.

DIR Javier Rioyo, J.L. López-Linares

PROD F. Torresblanco, V. Andresco, S. Martínez **CAM** López-Linares **ED** Pablo Blanco, J. Fidel Collados **PRINT SOURCE** Cero en Conducta

In 1940, Ramon Mercader, a young Catalan, committed one of history's most famous crimes when he drove an ice pick into the skull of Leon Trotsky. Mercader was shrouded in mystery, and Oswald-type theories flourished. In a quest to find answers, journalist Javier Rioyo and cameraman López-Linares visited ten countries and conducted 50 interviews to come up with over 100 hours of footage. The portrait that emerges is of a pitiable mama's boy who later became a KGB member and wanted to engrave his name in history. He was the sort of man people laughed at when he boasted he was going to kill Trotsky. Wrinkled faces and words of wisdom abound amongst the old revolutionaries, friends and family who are interviewed. El Burrero, a fellow felon, fondly recalls: "We called him the Icepick Man." After the assassination, Mercader spent a total of 20 years in a Mexican jail, during which time he kept "silence and faith." The Mercader story travels to Cuba, Moscow, Paris and London, spreading its tentacles beyond the range of its apparent subject—even taking in Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera—without losing its focus. As well as shedding light on a problem that has tickled the Spanish subconscious for 50 years, the film also puts to rest Mercader's own hopes for heroic status. "Silence and faith," as one interviewee points out, "are not worth a bean in the end."

Jonathan Holland, Variety

Javier Rioyo (b. Madrid, Spain, 1952)

J. L. López-Linares (b. Madrid, Spain, 1955)

North American Premiere

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