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Chris Harman (1942-2009)

A life in the heart of the struggle

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Chris Harman, the editor of International Socialism and a central committee member of the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), died from a massive heart attack on November 6th. He was 67. We, and others in the Fourth International, join in sending condolences to Chris' family, friends and comrades.

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/chris-harman.jpg>]

Chris Harman

<http://foroanticapitalista.blogspot.com>

A convinced revolutionary socialist all his adult life, Harman had played a key role in founding *Socialist Worker* and editing it until 2004. Harman was an internationalist from the start. That was reflected in myriad ways, from his participation in the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign in the late 1960s to the symbolic location of his death: Cairo.

Harman was a polymath, gifted as an author, speaker, editor, leader and economist. His book *The Lost Revolution: Germany 1918 to 1923* is a powerful tool for revolutionary socialists. His greatest work, *A Peoples' History of the World*, is invaluable. He was also outstanding as an activist and leader of the SWP and its forerunner, the International Socialists. Harman played a major role in helping the organisation develop its political direction and in explaining its choices to a radical audience. His famous 1990-91 debate with Ernest Mandel on the bureaucratic Stalinist dictatorships in *Quatrième Internationale* was translated into English and is still in print as [The Fallacies of State Capitalism](#). His analysis of the SWP split from Respect was valued even by those who opposed the SWP's decision: it was translated by Inprecor and published in [Respect: Documents of the Crisis](#) as the clearest exposition of the SWP's viewpoint.

Harman took his role as an SWP leader seriously, but that did not stop him from having a transparent and comradely working relationship with socialists outside the SWP. Last month he was an active participant in the [IIRE's economists seminar](#), in which most participants were Fourth Internationalists. While there, he spoke at a public meeting sponsored by [Grenzeloos](#), the magazine of the Fourth International in The Netherlands.

As one of our comrades, Clement, put it on hearing the news: "Harman was for me the person from which I discovered Marxism, and which showed and revealed that revolutionary engagement was compatible with highly demanding scientific investigation for understanding and changing the world." Harman's openness, his books and articles, his work in the struggle and the contribution he made to developing the socialist consciousness of tens of thousands of people are a fitting monument to his revolutionary life.

Socialist Resistance editorial board,

November 7 2009.

P.S. This tribute is in Spanish at [Foro Anticapitalista](#). Photos of Chris and others at the economists seminar are online at <http://bit.ly/2oFMZv> while the speeches by Chris, Claudio Katz and Michel Husson are available as audio files at <http://bit.ly/4fmACP>.