

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7905>



In memoriam

In memory of Göte Kildén (Sweden)

- Features - In Memoriam - Obituaries and appreciations -

Publication date: Thursday 8 December 2022

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

Göte Kildén, pioneer of Socialist Politics (SP) in Sweden and the first editor of the journal *Internationalen*, died on Wednesday night last week [17 November]. Although we knew that Göte had been severely ill since a long time, many friends and comrades were halted mid-step, affected by the unfathomable. This is a [collage of texts and pictures](#) in memory of Göte.

Goodbye Göte, friend and comrade!

Today I received the news that my friend Göte Kildén had passed away. So sad. I looked forward to Göte starting work at Volvo trucks with great anticipation, I believe it was in 1978. After high school and a short period of military service in Östersund, I myself had started working the second shift in the assembly factory in August 1977.

I didn't know Göte then, I had perhaps met him fleetingly in the socialist movement, but he was surrounded by a sort of air for me: a journalist at the newspaper *Internationalen*, an agitator of rank in a way that cannot be found today, an ardent anti-Stalinist, one of the founders of today's Socialist Politics (SP) during the late 1960s, diligent in the debates around employee funds, Stalinism, the environmental and nuclear power issue and with a broad international outlook.

One of the rare wild strikes at Volvo broke out during the same week that Göte started working at Volvo Lastvagnars' factory in Lundby. One memory is a photo where Göte was one of the first in line to get through the factory gates at Torslandaverken, in order to get the metal workers there to participate in the strike. The main issue was, of course, the salary, but the conditions with assembly lines, time study workers, tightly bound jobs, poor working environment were also relevant, among other issues.

In Metall (the trade union for the metal workers), the Social Democrats had an almost total hegemony. If you didn't have the right party book, you wouldn't be elected. Top-down management was almost total. Members were seldom consulted. The contract negotiations were concluded through a sort of "win-win-method" with the company management. Finding out who became the winner of the Metall members and P G Gyllenhammar (CEO and chairman of Volvo) was not so difficult to calculate.

At Volvo, a Trade Union Opposition (Facklig opposition) arose in the mid-1970s. It was partly a collaboration of the motley left-wing groups which flourished at the time. But above all, the opposition was a movement with growing support among colleagues within the trade union. Facklig Opposition acted for fighting and democratic unions, for the agreements to be based on voting, for a more radical orientation in terms of working environment, emissions, attrition, for trade union skills and members' support to weigh more heavily than the party book. And with an outward look both at striking seamstresses who wanted to defend their jobs as well as union activists who suffered from the dictatorships in Latin America or the Eastern Bloc. Facklig opposition grew and challenged the Social Democrats within the Volvo Workshop Club, the largest in the country, with tens of thousands of members. Despite various bureaucratic loopholes and real obstacles, the Facklig Opposition managed to reach over 48 percent in the club election in 1979. This was an accomplishment with a ballot containing all the names, with possibility to erase, against a party ballot.

Facklig Opposition was voted in at the Lundby factory trade union for a couple of decades and within Group board number 11 (where I was the secretary) for around 10 years. One of the leading forces at Lundby was Göte, the truck

driver, who was elected chairman.

The combination of agitator and journalist made it possible for Göte to write flyers with headings such as “Gold in the 5-mile race (ski competition) - at the bottom of the wage league”. On Sunday, I guess that Thomas Wassberg had sprinted to the gold, which all his colleagues saw from the TV sofas, but there was far from any gold in their wallets.

Within SP, we met in debates at countless conferences. Most of the time we agreed, but sometimes disagreed. It was stimulating, but I was probably “a quiet Benjamin” against the agitator when he entered the pulpit. And what a fervor there was during the organizing around the People's Campaign against nuclear power, against the Directors' March (4th of October), Barsebäck and all other questions.

So many memories appear when one loses a friend. Such a foodie and a good cook. Crayfish parties with the Volvo gang in the house. Conversations, both live and during recent years mostly by phone. We had long conversations, about our families, children and grandchildren, about literature and film. About his grief for his wife Karin, who he was not living together with after retirement. About the development in politics which he followed on a detailed level and had clear opinions about. During the last years, Göte also joined the Left Party (Vänsterpartiet), but was prevented from participating actively due to various ailments.

My thoughts are with Göte's children and family.

Gus Kaage

The first editor of Internationalen

Göte Kildén was the first editor of the weekly magazine Internationalen. The magazine has been published weekly since 1974. It was not easy to publish a weekly magazine where the editorial board demanded high quality, due to small economic resources. I know through my own experiences, as the magazine's editor from 1989 to 1993.

Göte was not a trained journalist, but he knew how to write. This was useful for him later on during life when he was commissioned to write the history of the Gothenburg area of Hisingen. But above all, Göte had the ability to analyze and tell a story so that people in general understood.

Göte and I went together on an electoral tour to the North of Sweden in 1976. On the train to Kiruna, I remember Göte citing Mayakovsky's “A cloud in trousers”, and he had the idea that one should not be too smartly dressed at electoral meetings in a proletarian town such as Kiruna. I myself was skeptical, having experienced that poor people, like my own mother, thought it was important to be well dressed when doing something important. And electoral meetings were important.

It is amusing to think about which anecdotal images that sometimes stay in one's memory. Many people have memories of Göte Kildén from Volvo or from other party activities. Personally, I mostly remember him writing. And the brilliant speech he gave in the autumn of 2019 when the Association of Socialist Politics (SP) was finally formed, after fifty years of party building. A speech that did not in the least breathe resignation or loss, but looked to the future with confidence.

For Göte Kildén, a party or a newspaper was not an end in itself but a tool in the constant struggle for an equal and

In memory of Göte Kildén (Sweden)

just society, regardless of designation.

Eva Nikell

For more memories see the Facebook page [Remembering Göte Kildén](#)

PS:

If you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of International Viewpoint. Simply follow this link: [Donate](#) then enter an amount of your choice. One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are also vital to our continuing functioning. See the last paragraph of [this article](#) for our bank account details and take out a standing order. Thanks.