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Obituary

# Lennart Wallster 1944-2024

- Features - In Memoriam - Obituaries and appreciations -

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**Lennart Wallster is dead. He died at the age of eighty, four days before Christmas in his hometown of Kalmar in southern Sweden. For perhaps most of the readers of the press of the Swedish section Socialist Politics, SP, he is now probably an unfamiliar name, but for the older ones he was strongly associated with SP's very first days in the late 1960's and the commitment to building the political and organizational center of the Fourth International.**

For a good decade from the mid-1970s, he, like several other Swedish socialists, worked in the day-to-day management of the United Secretariat's office of the Fourth International, first in Brussels then in Paris. Here was his closest comrade Benny Åsman who had arrived earlier and together they were responsible for printing and distribution of the Fourth International's then newly started magazine *Inprecor*. In 1977, when the agency moved to Paris, Benny returned to Sweden while Lennart was given responsibility for the centre's finances and accounting together with Charles-André Udry. Other Swedes who during that time were active on site were Ken Lewis, Birgitta Nordlund and Tom Gustafsson, who died of illness already in 1987.

Lennart Wallster was born in 1944 under simple circumstances in a working-class family in Kalmar. His left behind diary and memory notes tell of proud parents when he managed to graduate and was able to start studying economic history at Lund University. There he soon became involved in the radicalization of the 1960s, participated in anti-military actions on the theme "Refuse to kill, refuse conscription" and transferred from social democratic youth organization to the radicalized student group of Clarté with its study circles in "Mao-tse-tung's thought" and anti-imperialism.

However, Lund's section of Clarté developed, among other things under the influence of Benny Åsman, into an opposition to Stalinism and Maoism in the new left. "Lundapesten", the "Plague of Lund", became the nickname from the maoists against the anti-Stalinists who after a while formed the Bolshevik group, one of the components of what would become the Swedish section of the Fourth International, RMF, Revolutionary Marxist League, in 1971. Lennart Wallster's diary entries describe in detail all the actions of the stormy 68 years, meetings, study circles, debates, battles and divisions, sometimes almost stenographically.

He himself came to apply for teacher training and ended up in the northern town of Umeå's radical left milieu, where he joined RMF and got involved in building and running the association's bookstore, Röda Rummet (the Red Room). He also writes about the involvement in the forest workers' strike in 1975 and the strike newspaper "Hugget" (The Cut) that SP's predecessor had printed. It was with those experiences, a decade of activities, political battles, studies and organization, that he was able to contribute to the organizational work of the Fourth International and not least administration at the center of the movement.

To his diary entries and documentation of these years comes an extensive photo archive where representatives of the leadership of the Fourth International and various sections flicker past from conferences, leadership meetings and demonstrations. The period from 1976 to 1987 when Lennart took part in the central work was marked both by the great years of success of the left in the wake of the Portuguese revolution, the fall of Franco, the victory in Vietnam, the colonial liberations and the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua and by the great upheavals of the 1980s and by the Reagans and Thatchers global backlash with the new Cold War. When Lennart Wallster was still working in the FS agency, the birth of the free Polish trade union movement Solidarity at the Lenin Yard in Gdansk in 1980 had kindled the hope of socialist liberation against the Stalinist dictatorships in the East. When he had returned to Sweden, the period began with the fall of the wall, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the neoliberal global capitalist revenge of the 1990s.

Lennart Wallster then installed himself as a teacher in his childhood town where family, children and work occupied

his time. He was happy to send his compendiums and study plans in history - on Marx and the history of socialism, source criticism against bourgeois textbooks and questions to interested comrades. But he missed being part of a socialist collective that had been his environment for so long. After retirement, he, like so many others, became interested in genealogy, and not just his own. Comrades, friends and acquaintances – and their relatives! - suddenly found their family trees researched and investigated through some search program that Lennart acquired. He not only helped with detailed mapping of the family history. He also sought out how later the lives of the women and men who were convicted after the so called potato riots in Stockholm in 1917 when Sweden too was on the brink of revolution.

Now Lennart Wallster is gone, but his diary and memory notes from the left-wing life that erupted in 1968 and marked a generation, remain as well as a treasure trove of pictures from the Fourth International that will be delivered to the movement's archives. They will form the basis in the future for an activist history of the stormy years that gave birth to both hope and determination, confidence and sorrows. And experiences for future generations.

*8 January 2024*

*Translated for **International Viewpoint** by the author from [Internationalen](#).*

*PS:*

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