



Tributes to Alain Krivine

“Over 60 years of activism for socialism”

5 September 2022, by **John Barzman**

Among them, British socialist Tariq Ali explained how he identified Krivine and the “Ligue”: “It was for us, those of us in smaller organizations of the Fourth International, the best organization of the Fourth International.” The International Socialist Tendency (IST) wrote: “above all we are in debt to Alain and his comrades in the JCR — the starting point of the LCR and now the NPA — for leading the way in reviving revolutionary socialism as a living force in Europe. They blazed a trail that we must continue to follow.”

Alex Calinicos (British SWP) stated: “For me he always represented the indomitable spirit of the great revolt by French workers and students in May 1968.”

Early Years

Krivine and his twin brother Hubert were born in Paris on July 10, 1941. Three of their four grandparents had immigrated from Ukraine and Romania to escape antisemitic pogroms at the end of the 19th century. The twins had three older brothers and a sister.

By the end of the year his father, a dentist, arranged for his wife and youngest children to move to a small town in the north of France; with the liberation of Paris the family was reunited.

Interested in politics from childhood — and growing up in a household that valued education — he, by 1960, was enrolled at Sorbonne University, studying history. Two years later he married his wife Michèle, who became a professor of history, geography and social sciences. They had two daughters, Nathalie (b. 1968) and Florence (b. 1974).

Alain Krivine joined the Communist Youth of France in 1957. His activity in support of Algerian independence led him to oppose the line of the French Communist Party (PCF), then the dominant force in the French left and labor movement (about twice the size and influence of the Socialist Party). This put him in contact with members of the French section of the Fourth International, the PCI (Parti communiste internationaliste), which he joined but without announcing it publicly to avoid expulsion.

He became a leader of the Union of Communist Students, his current known as “Guevarist” for their solidarity with the Cuban revolution. Finally, in 1965, entire local groups of the Union were expelled wholesale, including Krivine. He then turned to solidarity with Vietnam against the U.S. imperialist aggression, helping to found the National Vietnam Committee.

May 1968 and Beyond

Krivine’s celebrity comes mainly from his role in the May ’68 events.

A rising but relatively contained tide of workers’ struggles had been developing since 1963. In 1968 a massive student protest against police repression forced the unions and left parties to call a national demonstration and one-day general strike. But in one factory after the other, workers voted to continue the strike indefinitely, leading to the most massive labor strike in French history.

Because of its role in triggering the event, the student movement played a far more important role than its size would suggest (300,000 compared to 10 million workers on strike). And within this student movement Krivine’s JCR (Jeunesse communiste révolutionnaire), played a key role because of its previous work on Vietnam and its attempts to bring about a worker-student alliance, despite PCF attempts to separate the two movements.

French society and De Gaulle’s conservative government were shaken. For about 15 years thereafter, strikes multiplied, membership in unions and left parties grew, citizens voted increasingly to the left, and new

social movements emerged.

The JCR became the LC (Ligue communiste), renamed LCR (Ligue communiste révolutionnaire) after being banned: It grew from 300 to over 3000, acquiring influence in the trade unions (CGT, CFDT, FEN) and new social movements as well as in public debate where it was seen as the alternative to social democracy and Stalinism.

After François Mitterand, a social democrat, became president of France in 1981, the Ligue grew more slowly, while deepening its roots in the labor movement. Krivine remained among its leadership, attentive to any opening that might announce a new revolutionary upsurge, or a possible regroupment of revolutionary, or anticapitalist or simply class-struggle or neo-Keynesian forces.

But a capitalist counter offensive had begun under the guise of neoliberalism. Retrospectively we know that no social revolutions were successful even temporarily after Nicaragua (1979). In these tougher times for revolutionaries, Krivine became widely known for remaining true to the ideals of his youth.

Of course, many of his generation did likewise and quietly spawned the new social movements of the 1990s and beyond, but he was in the limelight and counterposed by the media to obvious turncoats like Daniel Cohn Bendit and Bernard-Henri Lévy. He described himself as a popularizer not a theoretician (“je suis un vulgarisateur”).

In the tributes many describe him also as a party builder, attentive to organizational detail, close to the rank-and-file, present at demonstrations, factory gate events, small local meetings and welcoming visitors at the national headquarters in Montreuil.
New Struggles

The 1995 strike wave, the emergence of the global social justice movement (“altermondialisme”) and the “No” vote on the 2005 referendum amending the European Union constitution, seemed to herald a new cycle of rising struggles. LCR

presidential candidate Olivier Besancenot received 4% of the vote in 2007, beating the PCF and Lutte Ouvrière (another Trotskyist group — ed.) candidates.

Krivine then supported the launching of a broad NPA (Nouveau Parti anticapitaliste) rather than pursuing unity with the anti-neo-liberal left (Collectifs unitaires anti-libéraux). The latter was later augmented by left-wing splits from the SP, became the Front de Gauche (PCF/far left/Parti de Gauche) and has reemerged today as the Nouvelle Union Populaire Ecologiste et Sociale (NUPES).

For a while, the NPA was broader than the LCR, incorporating anarchist and social justice collectives. But these currents soon were attracted by the broader Front de Gauche and its successors, or left the NPA for other reasons. Krivine followed politics until the very end, but did not live to see the foundation of the NUPES, in April 2022.

Builder and Organizer

These are the broad outlines of Krivine’s role on the French left. But his role on the world scene, as spreader of socialist ideas, organizer of solidarity networks and builder of revolutionary groups in many countries beyond France must also be addressed.

Krivine’s trajectory is profoundly embedded in international events. His first militant activity, at age 16, was as a French Communist Youth delegate to the World Festival of Democratic Youth held in Moscow in 1957 to promote Peace and Friendship.

This is where he met Algerian delegates who convinced him that the French PCF was not doing as much as it should to support their struggle for independence. The encounter was fundamental: Krivine saw himself as part of the historical Communist movement, articulating the interests of the world proletariat, and committed to act against his own imperialist homeland, France.*

His refusal to see France, despite its Gaullist dissidence from U.S.-led Western imperialism, as non-aligned or attached to the universal republican values of the French revolution on the world scene, remained with him throughout his life.

This was of course the basis for his support to Algerian self-determination in general, his specific solidarity with the movement actually leading the struggle, the FLN (Front de Libération nationale), whatever differences he might have with its leadership, and his creation of the Front Universitaire Antifasciste to combat the far-right forces defending the French colonial empire (the OAS, Organisation de l’Armée Secrète).

Solidarity with Cuba and Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s could also be seen as support for self-determination of nations struggling to free themselves from the domination of an imperialist master, although in these cases their enemy was not French but U.S. imperialism.

Unlike in Algeria, the movements actually leading these struggles seemed to promise clearly anticapitalist measures, in defiance of Moscow’s desire to preserve the status quo and avoid uncontrolled challenges to capitalism. The reputation of Krivine’s French movement as “Guevarist” was based on this perception of Vietnam and Cuba as relatively independent of the Soviet peaceful coexistence line.

Krivine’s activism on Vietnam brought him to street demonstrations in Berlin, Brussels and London and encouraged contacts in the United States and many other countries.

In the United States, the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance were playing an important role in organizing the antiwar movement. This registered with the U.S. (SWP) and French organizations of the Fourth International, who saw the possibility of escalating formal fraternal relations established by the FI’s reunification of 1963 into a more active collaboration on common initiatives around Vietnam and student and youth work.

Personal Recollections

Just then, I happened to have joined the JCR in France and was preparing to go to college in the United States in fall 1965. Krivine and others quickly told me that I was not simply a revolutionary Marxist and a critical Communist but a Trotskyist (a discovery recounted by others), and sent me to see Pierre Frank, the leader of the PCI at the time, who gave me a letter to carry to New York and introduce myself to Mary-Alice Waters and Jack Barnes of the YSA and SWP.

May '68 had a big impact on the U.S. antiwar and student movement. The events demonstrated the potential of the working class of advanced capitalist countries to awaken and mobilize. Mary Alice Waters and Joseph Hansen, an older leader of the SWP, were in Paris, meeting occasionally with Krivine and covering events.

Out of these encounters came the widely distributed Revolt in France May-June 1968. A Contemporary Record Compiled from Intercontinental Press and the Militant. The YSA issued a badge of solidarity with the JCR and, one of its leaders, Peter Camejo engaged in "the battle of Telegraph Avenue" in Berkeley (June-July 1968).

As Tariq Ali's tribute above emphasized, Krivine's Ligue became the model for groups and individuals around the world drawn to revolutionary socialism. Krivine and other leaders of the French section spent time in other countries to develop closer links (Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Britain, Sweden, Canada, Switzerland, Germany, Holland).

In some countries with a weak, purely intellectual or non-existent Trotskyist tradition, imitation or adaptation of the Ligue model became the norm. In

countries like the United States with a stronger Trotskyist tradition, the lessons of the French experience raised discussions.

Alain Krivine, then using the pen name Delfin, was intricately involved in these debates around political issues such as the nature of the new youth radicalization, the role of universities in revolutionary upsurges, the need for a gradual turn of student-based organizations towards the labor movement and working class. But they also involved organizational differences about party democracy and tendency representation.

Here my path again crossed Alain Krivine's. I was involved in two debates in the U.S. SWP, the first in 1971 around a document calling "For a Proletarian Orientation," the second in 1973 around critical support for a European Perspectives resolution that included a turn to the working class.

In my opinion, the 1973 debate over a guerilla warfare strategy, allegedly adopted by the FI in 1969, was a diversion from the main issues and practical options which centered on advanced capitalist countries. In both cases, the minority point of view was not represented as such on the National Committee of the SWP.

In 1974, the minority supporters (Internationalist Tendency) were expelled without a trial. Krivine as a leader of the largest organization of the FI which took pride in its democratic internal regime and respect for minority rights, supported the official FI disapproval of the expulsion. I was elected to the International Executive Committee of the FI and saw Krivine regularly at meetings.

From 1981 to 1989, I worked part-time at the international center of the FI as a translator and editor, and

continued to witness Krivine's involvement in attempts to build the FI. There were visits or exchanges with Brazil and Mexico, two countries where the FI had large sections.

He was an international observer of the 1984 and 1990 elections in Nicaragua. In 1999, Krivine was elected to the European Parliament (EP), which enabled him to play an international role with more authority, such as during his trip to Caracas, Venezuela in 2003 to celebrate the defeat of the attempted coup against Hugo Chavez. And when the United States lifted its longtime refusal to deliver a visa in March 2003, for a visit to Kofi Annan, of the UN, along with a delegation of the EP protesting the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

He continued to help the FI build revolutionary organizations to the very end: in Moscow in 2006, to discuss with activists of the new socialist group Vperiod; in Madrid in 2010 to honor Daniel Bensaid, in Athens to help organize resistance to the diktats of the troika (European institutions that imposed crippling austerity on Greece — ed.), and in Kiev in 2015 at the invitation of the Sotsyalni Rukh movement.

Alain Krivine's legacy: Over 60 years of activism for socialism on a global scale.

**Krivine's [testimony](#), translated from Jacques Charby's *Les Porteurs d'Espoir (La Découverte, Paris, 2004)* explains this moment.*

*+Alain Krivine's memoir, **Ça te passera avec l'âge** ("You'll Grow Out of It") was published in 2006 by Flammarion. See an [English biographical sketch](#) of his life and work.*

Source: September-October 2022, [ATC 220](#).

"To hold on as he held on, optimism of the

will had to prevail”

10 April 2022, by **Michèle Krivine**

I met Alain for the first time in the summer of 1955. I was going on 13, he had just turned 14. Some Communist friends of my parents, with whom we were going to spend the weekend, had asked them to take their little neighbour by car. When I saw the little neighbour, I was very affected because he was then a very pretty boy.

But the only thing he was interested in was discussing politics with my father. The only concrete memory I have is that it was about the Indochina war and the trafficking of piastres. I don't know if many people here remember what the traffic of piastres was; But Alain, knowing that my father had denounced it in *France Observateur*, wanted to know all the details. A young militant in the Vaillants [a leftist scout movement] and then in the Communist Youth, he was already totally addicted to politics. On the other hand, he showed no interest in me. Which was my first disillusionment.

In 1961, I joined the Anti-Fascist University Front, created to oppose the OAS, and of which Alain was one of the leaders, earning him an attempted attack with plastic explosives. The little Stalinist of 1955 had become a convinced Trotskyist but was still active in the PCF and the UEC. We married the following year, in 1962, me with parental permission. So, it's been 60 years. A long companionship that has ended.

The 1960s were obviously very exhilarating. We were history students at the Sorbonne, totally carefree about our professional future like all those of our generation. We were at the age where the most lasting friendships are forged. We were militants in the Union of Communist Students convinced that by fighting against its then very Stalinist leadership we were going to shake the edifice, We did not shake much because we were expelled at a

congress where Roland Leroy gave a speech of great violence against our deviations.

Because beyond the refusal to vote for Mitterrand in 1965, which at the time it should be remembered evoked his inglorious positions on the Algerian war, it was all the criticism of the Soviet Union that the Communist Party could not tolerate. In a deathly silence one of our comrades told him: “Roland, your speech was as beautiful as a Soviet tank in front of Budapest”. I evoke for you the atmosphere of the time. The Communists present here, whom I salute, will not mind me recalling this episode. Time has passed and validated our criticisms and analyses of Stalinism.

Then came the protests against the Vietnam War and of course May '68. I'm not going to dwell on May '68. Everyone knows that Alain was totally involved. I will simply quote a sentence from him which was the compass of his entire militant life: “May '68 taught us that we can break the shackles and allowed us to glimpse the organizational potential of society by those who do the work but have no decision-making power.” He paid for his commitment with one month in the La Santé prison in conditions which, it must be admitted, were rather comfortable. Then after released, it was directly to military service in Verdun and then directly to the presidential election of 1969. His meagre score made me understand that a breakthrough was not imminent. But he was not affected because remember it was the time of “élections piège à cons” [“elections are a trap for fools”]. In the 1974 election, Arlette grilled him politely. When he watched the television performances of his campaigns he said humorously: “Oh there, I really had to scare them”.

Sharing Alain's life for 60 years means that he had some virtues. First, he was

incredibly optimistic. I seem to remember that it was Gramsci who said: “we must combine optimism of the will with pessimism of the intellect”. As for optimism of the will, Alain did not lack it. He was in all the fights whether successful or lost. If there is one sport he practiced it was walking. He trod the pavement for a thousand national or international causes. I remember one: he liked to recall that he was the only politician present at the first gay pride in the early 1980s. And he made us laugh by telling us, half in jest, what he heard people there say: “it really is him! We wouldn't have believed it!” On the other hand, pessimism of the intellect was not really natural to him. He had a somewhat euphoric vision of the struggles in progress, an ability to quickly forget failures. But given the evolution of the world today, which he considered much harsher than in 1968, I think that to hold on as he held on, optimism of the will had to prevail.

Living with an optimist when you are not always optimistic yourself is a real privilege. He taught me to put into perspective what didn't matter and to approach difficult times with courage. And until the end he kept this optimism despite the succession of illnesses that did not spare him in recent years. He kept telling us, “don't worry, it's going to be okay”.

Another pleasant quality of Alain he was a feminist both in his convictions and in his behaviour. It is also a trademark among all the Krivines, his brothers as well as the males of the second and third generation. Beyond convictions, to what is this attributable? To the beautiful person that was their mother, Esther, most certainly. To the personality of their companions. And for Alain to a feminine environment that suited him very well: two daughters and two granddaughters, girls with strong characters.

Finally in his personal life Alain was a tolerant, benevolent and very kind man. Tolerant first of myself, who, in short, became more Jaurès than Lenin. He never had a problem with that. Agreements and disagreements have had the advantage of enlivening our daily lives. Benevolent towards his elders and many comrades who, out of weariness or divergence, left his organizations. Those who were his friends remained his friends. Was he as cool in his activist life? I hope so. But given the bitterness of the debates of which his organizations had the secret, it must not always have been

so easy.

So, any regrets to have? Activism is so time-consuming that it leaves little room for what makes life enjoyable and light. Between meetings you can always fit music and movie ins. But literature, theatre and exhibitions are often the great sacrifices! Did he miss it? Sometimes yes but actually not very often. He led the life he had wanted. That of an activist to the end of his possibilities. Fortunately, there are holidays. On vacation Alain knew how to completely switch off.

In closing, I would like to thank all

those who were so much present with us when his health was declining. All those who are here today to pay tribute to him. All those who have flooded me with warm messages since his death with the same words that come up again and again: humanity, empathy, benevolence, simplicity, humour, selflessness.

I will stop there because it would border on the cult of personality which he would not have appreciated. I hope that all those who loved him will remember a man of great integrity.

21 March 2022

“Alain showed that you could be a Trotskyist, intelligent and honest at the same time”

10 April 2022, by Hubert Krivine

My relationship with Alain started early since I knew him nine months before he was born. We now know that a whole psychic life develops in utero between mother and child; it must certainly be true between twins and have left unconscious traces for me.

My first memories date from the end of the war: refugees in La Fère, there was a pig on the farm called Adolf, but shhh, it should not be said (Neither Alain nor I understood why) and also the bombing of Ternier by the allies, the fear of the adults...

Then, it was the liberation: my mother lost her two brothers in the Resistance: one, Albert Lautman, shot near Bordeaux, the other, Jules, temporarily a survivor of Neuengamme and whose presence I remember, lying down and sick at home. Don't make noise: Uncle Jules must rest.

In our early childhood our mother collected all the documents about the concentration camps: photos, newspapers. Tattoos of numbers were also seen on the forearms of the

survivors; without really understanding, we could guess the gravity of these things. My father, silent, read *Le Figaro* and voted socialist. Which he rightly did not consider contradictory.

In the 1950s, intense political activity stirred up the house, involving our three older brothers. I remember the impression they gave us when they returned from demonstrations against the “Nazi Figaro” (publishing the memoirs of Von Scholtitz, the last commander of Nazi-occupied Paris. The PCF had organized commandos burning the newspapers) or against Ridgway “the plague” with the bacteriological war in Korea. I also remember that Alain and I were very moved following on the radio the news of the execution of the Rosenbergs (Julius and Ethel) in 1953 on the electric chair.

It was in this atmosphere that Alain began to be active in the Vaillants (PCF youth movement), then in the UJRF and the JC. A very good activist, promised a bright future. The reward: attending the 1957 youth festival in Moscow. Troubled by his meeting with

the Algerians of the FLN (softness of the PCF). Nevertheless, it must be said, he led the high school circle in Condorcet as a good Stalinist, in permanent struggle with the UEC circle of the same high school with a majority won to Trotskyism.

But, at the very end of the 1950s, he wanted to do something concrete for Algeria. Remember the violence of repression. 500,000 dead and generalized torture, the barbarity of napalm. Nothing for Putin to envy! When we knew, it was impossible to remain passive.

Alain contracted jaundice and taking advantage of a decrease in his immune defences Jean-Michel and I passed him some good literature and especially the contact with JR (with the name not being trivial: Jeune resistance). An organization that would develop anti-militarist propaganda in the barracks and even help what were known as “the suitcase carriers” of the FLN.

In 1961 he joined the Fourth International. Without knowing that I was already there for four years...

Why this secrecy and the difficulty of this “coming out”? We had not really left the atmosphere of Hitlero-Trotskyism (the Islamo-leftism of the time). In the USSR they shot, here they punched.

Creation of the Front unitaire antifasciste (Anti-Fascist Unitary Front - FUA) in 1961 in the face of the generals’ putsch in Algiers. Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Schwartz, Vidal-Naquet. Thousands of students, +PSU, UEC and so on. The FUA was certainly one of his greatest successes. Let’s mention a gift from the OAS: a small plastic explosive at home.

1965: the refusal to support Mitterrand led to the foundation of the Jeunesse communiste révolutionnaire (Revolutionary Communist Youth - JCR), dissolved in 1968 for its participation in the barricades. Tribute was paid to Alain by Marcellin - the Darmanin of the time (same style, same elegance) - who said: “I will repress any violence, even if, when necessary, we have to put a few hundred little Krivines out of harm’s way” (sic!).

It’s hard to talk about your brother. Moreover, the Krivines do not like to talk too much about themselves; for fear of being immodest.

Contrary to appearances, Alain was very shy in front of two or three people he did not know. But not in front of a few thousand... (We were truly false twins, with complementary qualities and flaws). An anecdote: when we were hosted for a while by Juliette Gréco and Piccoli in 1973 (umpteenth dissolution) to the natural question: “Do you want to have a bite to eat?”, Alain answered “Oh no, I would not want to disturb you”. I shocked him a little when I accepted. He had been raised with this almost sickly concern “not to disturb.” A concern that he would maintain until the end.

There is an Israeli joke that you could not be simultaneously a member of Mapam, intelligent and honest. You have to choose combinations. This applies quite well today to so-called left-wing organizations. But Alain showed that you could be a Trotskyist, intelligent and honest at the same time. The loss of the socialist or communist ideal, betrayed or soiled by the parties that bear their names, is one of the reasons blocking many mobilizations. With his enthusiasm and talent, Alain contributed in practice and on a large scale to a beginning of this rehabilitation which is essential to move forward.

I liked his form of humour; he summed up the *Katangais* (the black blocs of May 68), with this mordant formula: “those who want to destroy the bourgeois university, starting with its furniture...”. Just recently, in the nursing home when he hardly spoke anymore, he was shown pictures of people to recognize; in a photo of me he suddenly answered the question “who is he?” with a “he’s a jerk!”. So, he recognized me. Which gave me immense joy.

Joy that I felt again when he surprisingly understood Cathy’s phone call that announced the 500 sponsorships for Poutou. Alain showed a lot of political courage and, on many occasions, physical courage; he died without ever complaining, surrounded by the tireless affection of Michèle and their two daughters Nathalie and Florence. The constant support and camaraderie of his NPA comrades also meant a lot to him.

In Latin America, militants do not call each other “camarada”, but “hermano” (brother). Alain was both for me. But not only for me, as evidenced by the mass of friends and comrades gathered here. It’s heart-warming for me - for us. Thank you for being here.

21 March 2022

“Keep the sense of commitment as a banner”

10 April 2022, by **Olivier Besancenot**

Later, during all the years of our joint activism, I was able to lavishly appreciate his simplicity and commitment. “Whether there are ten people in a meeting or thousands, you have to go get them one by one,” he repeated to me. Alain had faith only in the virtue of militant activity, by which he measured the sacrifices of each and every one of us - except his own. Like many, I often had the opportunity to savour his taste for derision - that singular self-mockery that made him so accessible - as well as his legendary sense of humour which,

without a doubt, was also accessible to all.

Throughout this time, especially during the 1990s, Alain saved the day more than once by allowing us to keep our heads above water thanks to his popularity and the social breadth of his intervention. His address book was used on many occasions to set up or amplify activist initiatives, from the campaign for the cancellation of the debt “Ça suffat comme ci!” in 1989 to the mobilization of undocumented migrants in the Église Saint-Bernard

in 1996, not to mention the requisitions of empty housing with the DAL alongside his ally, the surgeon Léon Schwartzenberg. I also remember that Alain was one of the first on the central committee of the Ligue to foresee the 1995 general strike against the Juppé plan, suffering some amused remarks in the process. Yet it was he who was right.

In 1999, in the European Parliament where we formed a small team around Roseline Vachetta and Alain, I remember that he never noticed the

guilty conscience clearly displayed in the eyes of some other former leaders of May 68 when we met them in the corridors. They had been comfortably elected for years after adopting a political trajectory very different from his own. He didn't care because he didn't indulge in that kind of judgment. A quality that he tried with others to instil in me as best he could.

There are a thousand and one shared memories and I know that Alain did not like to fall into the register of nostalgia either. I would just like to emphasize the immense strength he bequeathed to me during the

presidential campaigns, to try to give me the confidence that I did not have, and by all the necessary means. Before and after each meeting and each broadcast. Without condescension, without paternalism. With unshakeable fidelity and extraordinary friendship.

Alain always insisted that the most beautiful way to celebrate the memory of the fallen is to perpetuate their struggle. So, I want to keep the sense of his commitment as a banner. A beautiful banner that I feel proud of, thanks to him. Together with a non-negotiable internationalism, rejecting any form of imperialism or national

unity. Draped in an anti-fascism as visceral as it was thought out, the very thing that history once again demands of us. Red with a living, unitary and non-dogmatic Marxism. Crowned by his revolutionary obstinacy in wanting to build a better world.

You are quite right Alain: "There are even more reasons, today, to be in revolt and be a revolutionary than yesterday". Only, without you, today will never be the same again. My thoughts to Michèle, Florence, Nathalie and Hubert.

21 March 2022

"Alain made the construction of the Fourth International his life's project"

10 April 2022, by Alex Merlo

I met Alain in 2008 when he came to Madrid for a meeting on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of May 1968. I had been responsible for his assistance and interpretation. I remember his kindness and intelligence.

At the end of the meeting, a young French woman who was a student in Madrid came to talk to him. The conversation must have pleased him since he asked me to bring him the contact sheet quickly. He took good care to record all her details there. During the evening and until his departure, Alain insisted to us: "call her", "do not forget to follow this contact". He was proud to have contributed as an activist to building the section of the Fourth International in the Spanish state.

Alain's influence is measured in the many messages we have received from

all over the world. We chose to share two that seem particularly significant to us.

First, that of Ilya Budraitskis, a Russian activist of the Fourth International. He tells us how Alain's visit to Moscow in 2002 finally led to the creation of the Russian group of the Fourth International. He writes: "In the years that followed, Alain remained in constant contact with us, travelling to Russia many times to support solidarity campaigns and workers' strikes. He visited many parts of our country and understood very well the conditions of ordinary people and the risks of political struggle. And he remained a historical optimist, while maintaining a 'pessimism of the intellect'."

The second message is from Socialny Rukh, the Ukrainian socialist

organization: "Impressed by the revolutionary events on the squares of Ukraine, Alain Krivine attended a demonstration in Kyiv 2015. After this, he, as a guest of honour, joined the conference of the Ukrainian Left, in which, left-wing and trade union activists voted for the name of the future left party "Social movement". Today we are grateful to his comrades from the New Anticapitalist Party, who consistently support the Ukrainian people against Putin's imperialism." Alain, like other comrades of his generation, made the construction of the Fourth International his life's project. It leaves us with a valuable and indispensable tool to fight against capitalism and imperialism. To thank him, and to pay tribute to him, we can only repeat the rule by which he lived his life: "This is only the beginning, let's continue the fight!"

21 March 2022

“The intelligence to put immediate reality into perspective with new historical horizons”

10 April 2022, by François Sabado

Impressed by what he embodied, what struck me above all was his warmth, his simplicity, his easy access, his listening to the questions asked by the young people present in this room. Already, Alain managed to combine a life as everyday militant with embodying a history, a struggle, and a political continuity.

I was to be an activist at his side for nearly fifty years. The support he gave to the oppressed was constant, whether it was Algeria in 1956, the revolts in Prague, May 68 or Nicaragua. Alain's internationalism was never abstract: in each of these struggles, he forged links with activists, who sometimes became friends, such as Petr Uhl, one of the leaders of the Prague Spring. These years led him from the Communist movement, from the colonial revolutions to the Fourth International.

At this precise moment, how can we not evoke the duo formed by Alain and Daniel Bensaid. Working together in the leadership of the Ligue, they tried to make the link between the daily intervention of the organization and the major revolutionary strategic hypotheses. In this duo, Daniel embodied the Ligue in ideas, and Alain was the Ligue in organization.

To achieve this, they had to walk a fine line: distancing ourselves from reformism while seeking the integration of revolutionaries into the real movement of the masses. Alain was unitary: he spared no effort and was always available to support struggles, with the common thread of unity of action and the defence of an anti-capitalist program.

He was obsessed with dialogue with left-wing activists, in particular, Communist activists, and beyond that, trade unionists, leaders of social movements. He put his talent at the service of a permanent approach: to popularize our politics by finding the words, the formulas that hit the mark.

Finally, Alain was a “party man”, in the historical sense but also on a daily basis on the ground, far from the image of the sectarian who “cultivates the particular silhouette of their organization”. Let us also remember how much he liked to put himself at the service of others: whether it was to distribute leaflets, to tidy up the room or to serve as a driver for the organization.

He saw the organization as an instrument, an effective means of defending revolutionary ideas. After

the defeats of the twentieth century and the change of era we are experiencing, the need for a reorganization of the historical emancipation movement is felt. Alain felt it vividly in the core of his being.

Today, Alain is leaving us as war returns to Europe. His struggles remind us of it: our camp is that of the oppressed peoples, of their rights, never of oppressors. With him, what disappears is more than sixty years of political struggles, and above all a sense of initiative, a rare political sense.

Often those who knew him said of Alain that he “had a nose”, that he grasped situations, the balance of forces. But above all, he had the intelligence to put immediate reality into perspective with new historical horizons. This quality allowed him to resist the sirens of power to which so many others of his generation have succumbed.

Alain embodied the nobility of politics and commands our respect! Finally, a last word to say how precious and necessary Michèle's presence and support has been throughout his life.

Alain we already miss you.

21 March 2022

“The solidity of a rock and the flair of a perfumer”

10 April 2022, by Charles Michaloux

Alain had a beautiful and full life. Until his last breath he fought for what he believed to be true and what he knew was right. Like others, he was not protected against mistakes, setbacks, disappointments. He knew how to recognize and ward them off, often with sharp humour. But also, he savoured the victories (and there were some!) to feed his personal machine to convince and to fight.

In all fields since his early youth, he tirelessly campaigned for the proven revolutionary conviction that was his to meet the reality of the transformations and upheavals of society. Thus, he was in all the struggles, with a modest presence that commanded respect. Quite the opposite of a dogmatist in short.

His personality was marked by an impressive fidelity and unwavering constancy, combined with an unfailing open-mindedness and a tireless interest in what was new and promising.

The solidity of a rock and the flair of a perfumer, that was what characterized

him. Rock and nose: the words made him smile, but he knew it was our mark of respect and friendship.

His political career, over more than sixty years, embraced all major political and social events. And always, with the common thread of a desire to build the necessary instrument to change the world, with the same determination of the Left Opposition in the Union of Communist Students and the PCF in the JCR, the Ligue communiste, the LCR, finally the NPA and always the Fourth International.

I first met Alain in 1965. I was in my final year at the Lycée Voltaire; he was my history teacher. At the time I was in the JC (the youth wing of the PCF) and opposing him in the PCF and the UEC. One day, after the class, he invited me to stay. He then asked me, "Are you a Communist?". Young and proud, I answered: "Yes, does it bother you?". "Not at all," he told me, "So am I." He offered to talk to me. From there dates my commitment to him and our friendship, never belied by differences in the latter period.

My bright memory begins there. It ends unfortunately with the image of a suffering and diminished man who no longer resembled this rock with a fine political nose. The pain of losing him is added for me to others symbolized by this photo taken during the rally organized by the Ligue to celebrate the centenary of the Commune in the spring of 1971, in the wake of May 68, on the crest of major international mobilizations.

In this photo are Henri Weber (who later distanced himself politically by joining the PS, but who never repudiated his old friendships), Daniel Bensaïd (the ever present accomplice and inspiration), Gérard Verbizier (the internationalist conscience of the big family), Alain Krivine naturally and myself.

They are all gone, and I miss them - along with our ardent hope, which always lived in Alain. Thank you, dear Alain, for serving it so long and so well.

21 March 2022

Alain Krivine was an authentic internationalist revolutionary

21 March 2022, by Éric Toussaint

I met Alain Krivine in person 52 years ago in October 1970 at the conference for a Red Europe organised in Brussels by the Fourth International. More than 3000 activists from all over Europe took part. I was 16 years old and had just joined the Fourth International a few months before. Since then, I have stayed in contact with Alain and have been active in the same international organisation as him.

Alain Krivine actively supported the process of merging the various organisations that formed the Ligue révolutionnaire des travailleurs, the Belgian section of the Fourth International, in 1971. He was present at its congress in May 1971 in Liège and came to Belgium on numerous occasions to support the organisation's development efforts. He was a very good speaker and his contribution to the May 1968 movement was widely recognised

outside France.

Alain Krivine made a major contribution to the work of the IVth International. He never spared any effort to ensure that in France and elsewhere the internationalism of the peoples and the oppressed was expressed in practice. Always ready to participate in a solidarity demonstration, to contribute to the launching of a unitary appeal, to bring his help to the realisation of a

convergence between movements and individuals. Always ready to support a workers' struggle, to promote coordination between workers from different headquarters of a multinational company.

It should be added that among his many actions, Alain Krivine played a very active role in organising the mobilisation against the initiative taken by François Mitterrand to commemorate the bicentenary of the French revolution, who in 1989 convened a meeting of the imperialist powers in Paris, the infamous G7. Alain's desire for collective action led to the enormous success of the campaign "Debt, colonies, apartheid; enough is enough" on 14 July 1989, with a unitary march and a big concert at the Bastille with Renaud, Johnny Clegg and the Green Negresses. Alain Krivine and the LCR acted in concert with Cedetim, Gilles Perrault, Jacques Gaillot, Renaud Séchan.

This initiative, based on the Bastille Appeal for the cancellation of Third World debt, contributed to the creation in Belgium in 1990 of the Committee for the Cancellation of Third World Debt. Since then, this

committee, which became the Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debts, has become an international network present in over 30 countries, including 16 African countries.

As one of the founders of this network, I can testify to the permanent support given to it by Alain Krivine.

Alain was also very motivated by solidarity with the Cuban revolution and people. It was not blind solidarity. The solidarity was critical, but it did not hesitate to support material efforts in the face of the blockade imposed by Washington imperialism.

Alain Krivine, until a few years ago, actively participated in the meetings of the bureau of the Fourth International. He never withdrew from activity in his own country. He was always convinced that the struggle for revolution was taking place on a global scale and that the Fourth International should be strengthened as much as possible. He never considered the Fourth International to be the only international revolutionary organisation. He knew perfectly well that it had to be strengthened, opened

up and regrouped. This is why he put a lot of energy into the efforts to create a common framework between anti-capitalist organisations on a European scale in all their diversity. This work must undoubtedly be taken up again at a time when a new war is underway on European soil. Alain Krivine has devoted a lot of energy to supporting the comrades who formed the section of the Fourth International in Russia several years ago and who are now fighting against Putin's imperialism.

On a personal level, I always appreciated Alain's great human qualities in the small details as well as in the big ones, in the good moments as well as in the difficult situations. He was also always ready to try to answer a request for information on the struggles going on in France, on the action of the NPA, available to communicate an address useful for the action, ready to give a hand to facilitate a contact, to try to raise morale when in doubt.

Alain was a great friend, a great revolutionary, a great comrade.

20 March 2020

The Integrity of a Revolutionary: Alain Krivine, 1941-2022

16 March 2022, by **Edwy Plenel**

Ça te passera avec l'âge — "You'll Grow Out of It". When, in 2006, Alain Krivine agreed to write a memoir recounting not his life but a "collective adventure" embodying "the possibility of a democratic revolution", he chose this phrase for the title of his account.

From his commitment to the Communist cause as a Paris schoolboy in the 1950s, to handing over the reins to a new generation in the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) half a century later, via his constant role as spokesman for the Revolutionary Communist Youth (JCR) in 1968 then

the Communist League (1969-1973) and, Revolutionary Communist League (1974-2009), Alain Krivine never did really grow out of "it".

But what was "it"? It was this simple idea that emancipation, the quest for freedom, the hope for equality, the demand for justice, are first and foremost a refusal, a negation of the existing order, an outburst against its miseries, its lies, its many forms of domination. What we normally call the Left is born of this infinite, ever renewed and unfinished movement, confronting the constantly reborn

conservatisms of all types.

But, sometimes, it so happens that the Lefts of power, of *raison d'état* or *raison de parti*, turn their backs on "it", and themselves embody injustice, to the point of turning their promise to ashes. If Alain Krivine stood apart in the world of politics, that was because his unwavering fidelity to his initial revolt was accompanied by a rejection of ambitions and compromises, careers and positions — the kind in which the ideal goes astray and becomes corrupted.

The moment of Krivine's death reminds us how much this unyielding stance — in his case, one devoid of sectarianism — can save clear-sightedness itself. His committed life began with the challenge to the imposture whose disasters and ultimate collapse have today given birth to the new Russian imperialism led by Vladimir Putin — a monstrous avatar of Soviet Stalinism, Great-Russian Tsarism and untrammelled capitalism.

This was the left-wing opposition to the "actually-existing socialism" of the twentieth century, established by USSR and its satellites after 1917, in the wake of what Leon Trotsky termed "the revolution betrayed." This is not just a remote past that fell away with the end of the Soviet Union in 1991: the war on Ukraine — invaded by the army of a KGB-educated dictator — shows us just how relevant it continues to be. As if echoing this past present, it so happens that the paternal side of Alain Krivine's family hailed from Ukraine; his grandfather Albert Meyer Krivine (1869-1946) was an atheist Jew of anarchist leanings, having fled to France from the anti-Jewish pogroms in the turn-of-the-century Russian Empire.

Whatever its sectarian variants — born of its situations as a minoritarian or even groupuscular phenomenon — Trotskyism, to which Krivine is inextricably bound, was an ethical revolt. It compelled us to confront the truth of a totalitarian system, instead of giving in to an allegiance that meant blindness and lies. In its most libertarian version, close to surrealism, it was the refusal of inadmissible means that contradicted the proclaimed ends; it was also a refusal of a retreat into nationalism and imperialism that turned its back on internationalism, as well as of the apparatchik-logics that gave rise to bureaucracies of professional politicians.

In this respect, Alain Krivine's militant life leaves behind the promise of an honest Left when, all too often, electoral careerism and partisan cynicism have damaged its principles and dashed its hopes. It began in the mid-1950s when, as a young militant of the French Communist Party (PCF),

he quickly became the cadre in charge of all the Communist high schoolers of Paris.

Krivine was thus destined for a rapid rise through the ranks of the PCF apparatus. In 1957, the year he turned 16, he took part in the World Festival of Democratic Youth, in Moscow, having distinguished himself through his record-beating sales of the Communist Youth newspaper *L'Avant-Garde*. But he came back wracked with doubts, especially after meeting Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) militants who were shocked by the PCF's wait-and-see attitude toward their fight for independence; the party called for "Peace in Algeria", refusing to resolutely support their struggle.

The colonial question had made Alain Krivine see the need for solidarity with peoples struggling to become masters of their own destiny, and he gradually detached himself from the Stalinism which, reigning in the PCF of the time, weighed heavily on the French Left. This development was also a family affair: here he crossed paths with his elder brother Jean-Michel and his twin brother Hubert, who were already members of the Internationalist Communist Party (PCI), which was one of the Trotskyist organisations and also the French section of the Fourth International.

Engaged in clandestine support for Algeria's FLN with the *Jeune Résistance* network, while remaining a Communist, Krivine, who had in the meantime also begun his undergrad history studies, became a militant in both the Union of Communist Students (UEC) and the French Students' Union (UNEF). Anticolonialism and antifascism were the two decisive markers of his political engagement in this period, as materialised in the creation of the Antifascist University Front at the Sorbonne. He was one of its leaders, together with Henri Weber, who died in 2020.

The final break with the PCF came in 1965, when the Sorbonne-Lettres section of the UEC, in which he worked together with a Trotskyist "entryist" fraction, refused to support François Mitterrand's presidential

candidacy, to which the PCF had given its backing. The future president's commitment in opposition to Algerian independence and in support of the war against "separatism" was still fresh in the memory — and unforgivable in the eyes of this young generation, politicised and radicalised by anti-colonial struggles.

Now excluded from PCF ranks and preparing to become a history teacher, Alain Krivine gradually became the figurehead of a collective adventure of which he never sought to be the leader but rather one of the spokespersons. Claiming to be a better organiser than a theorist — and in any case an excellent orator, deft debater and a remarkable pedagogue — he always asserted his role as one activist among others, without hierarchies or privileges.

The emblematic trio he originally formed with Daniel Bensaïd (1946-2010) and Henri Weber (1944-2020), which became a duo in the 1980s when the latter joined the ranks of the Socialist Party, reminds us of the youth that was the driving force behind this lifelong commitment. When he stood for the presidential election in 1969, in the wake of May '68, while doing his military service, he was only 27 years old. At that time, a whole generation shook up its elders and ventured far beyond them, invented and innovated, challenging the established order with audacity and courage.

However, this apparent generational break masked an essential continuity: a Jewish history, as his entry in the *Maitron* biographical dictionary of the workers' movement emphasises. The core leadership of the Communist League, founded in 1969 after the JCR was banned in 1968, was largely the heir to "revolutionary Yiddishland", rooted in the political culture of a diasporic Jewish workers' movement which refused to dissolve into the nationalism of the Zionist movement.

Nous vengerons nos pères (We Will Avenge Our Fathers), a 2017 documentary by the next generation (Florence Johsua and Bernard Boespflug), shows the weight of the memory of the genocide and the primary role of anti-fascism in activist

commitment to the Communist League in the 1970s. Its logical consequence was a fierce resistance to the revival of the murderous ideologies of fascism and Nazism.

After a first spell in prison following the banning of the JCR in summer 1968, there would also be a second, lasting a few weeks, provoked by the second ban on the League [in 1973], after it organised a violent demonstration against a far-right meeting in Paris on the theme “Stop uncontrolled immigration” [the adjective in French also evokes the “uncivilised”]. Today, with the ideological climate of the current presidential campaign filled with xenophobic and racist obsessions, Krivine’s passing underlines the continued relevance of a struggle that forever occupied him.

In the inextricably democratic, social and internationalist radicalism that inspired Krivine, he was determinedly on the side of the movement of society rather than institutional politics. The supporters of the latter would confront him with the need to take responsibility faced with the impotence of his activism. In view of the state of the Left today, with its weaknesses, its divisions and its splits, it would be worth confronting them with the importance of concrete struggles, as close as possible to the people most directly concerned, as the breeding ground for the Left’s rebirth.

Under the banner of the “permanent revolution” theorised by Trotsky, the movementism of the current of which Alain Krivine was, for a long time, the voice and the face has always been on the lookout for the foundational event — that improbable and unforeseen moment, that breach in the fatality of the present, which the promise of the future could slip through. Marching together with this cause, Krivine was part of all manner of mobilisations, from the workers at Lip [an occupied and worker-managed watch factory] to the Larzac farmers, from the women’s movement to migrants’ struggles, from internationalist solidarity to alterglobalist rallies, without let-up.

Krivine became a full-timer for the Revolutionary Communist League,

then a journalist for *Rouge*, a newspaper that appeared as a daily from 1976 to 1979; he was also a Member of the European Parliament for one term, from 1999 to 2004. It would be an understatement to say that he didn’t really enjoy this, feeling much more powerless in this assembly than he did in activism as a militant. He was decidedly and determinedly on the outside, distancing himself from everything that could erode the ideal, compromise it or undermine it.

Krivine’s was a sincere and good-natured intransigence — explaining his popularity, as today evidenced by the many tributes coming from his political rivals. He wore his ever-joking modesty on his sleeve; he loved laughing with his fellows and willingly indulged in self-mockery. Krivine professed the asceticism of a bon vivant who had abandoned any desire for fortune or any ambition to “make it”.

Without doubt, it was this stubborn refusal to dominate and possess that made possible the challenge presented by the founding, in 2009, of the NPA, with the passing of the baton to a new generation, of which Olivier Besancenot was the first spokesperson, as the story with which Krivine’s own name is associated — that of the League — came to an end.

He gave his last long interview to Mediapart in 2018, when he was one of ten figures interviewed for a documentary series marking the fiftieth anniversary of May ’68. Thirty years earlier, upon the twentieth anniversary, he and Daniel Bensaïd had published *Mai si!* in which the pair took a stance as “rebels” — against those of their generation who had “repented”.

“How come they give up so quickly,” they asked.

Why did these heretics convert so easily? It would seem that their heresy was never more than a form of snobbery. ... People of different times, made of different stuff. The ancients were tempered by the test of misfortune. The moderns have often failed to resist the sweet seduction of notoriety. No one chooses what era

they live in. We can only be saddened that those who so loudly demanded the right to speak were so easily satisfied with the right to chatter; that they could not bear the first reversal of opinion. So much for the spirit of the times.

Whether the winds were behind him or against him, Alain Krivine chose to keep the same course. At the start of the conclusion to their *C’était la Ligue* (That Was the League), their work of reference on the history of which Krivine was the herald, Hélène Adam and François Coustal cite an extract from *Sans la nommer (la révolution permanente)*, a song by Georges Moustaki, written and composed in 1969. It is a fitting accompaniment to the last farewell to this man whose fidelity, humility and integrity command the esteem of all, including those who did not follow the same path:

She’s the one who’s beaten with a truncheon,

She’s the one who’s chased and hunted down.

She’s the one who rises up,

Who suffers and goes on strike.

She’s the one who’s imprisoned,

Who’s betrayed and abandoned,

Who makes us want to live,

Who makes us want to follow her

To the last, to the last

I would like, without naming her,

To tell you about her.

Beloved or unloved,

She is faithful,

And if you want

Let me introduce her to you,

We call her

Permanent revolution.

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