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Marxism

Mandel Symposium success

- News from around the world -

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Around 250 people attended a colloquium in Brussels on 19 November to discuss the life and ideas of Ernest Mandel, who died ten years ago this year.

[<https://npa31.org/IMG/jpg/Mandel1981.jpg>]

The event was organized by the Ernest Mandel Foundation, with the collaboration of the Leon Lesoil Foundation and the Marcel Liebman Foundation. The speakers in the four panels during the day included comrades who had closely collaborated with Mandel over the years, from veterans of the 1940s and 1950s to the generation that emerged after 1968.

The first panel discussed Mandel's concept of the building of revolutionary parties, with its complex articulation between the revolutionary nucleus, the broad workers' vanguard and the mass of the working class. Speakers included Mateo Alaluf from the Marcel Liebman Foundation, Georges Dobbeleer who had co-founded the newspaper *La Gauche* with Mandel in 1957, Guy Desolre, and Francois Vercammen.

A second panel dealt with Mandel's approach to the question of ecology. The Belgian writer on the philosophy of science, Isabelle Stengers, discussed with Daniel Tanuro, Gabriel Maissin and Michael Löwy, Marx and Mandel's understanding of the ecological dangers of growth in productivity.

A third panel underlined Mandel's very considerable contribution to the development of Marxist economics. On the panel were French economist Michel Husson and Francisco Louçã, who took time out from his campaign as presidential candidate of the Left Bloc in Portugal to analyse Mandel's specific conception of the long waves of capitalist development.

A final panel dealt more broadly with the relevance of Mandel's ideas for today. Speakers included Daniel Bensaid, Tariq Ali, Eric Toussaint, Francois Vercammen and Francisco Louçã, all of whom were part of the new "1968 generation" in which Mandel placed great hopes for the rebirth of the revolutionary movement.

[<https://npa31.org/IMG/jpg/mandeldvd.jpg>]

The Mandel DVD sold well

A thread which ran throughout the day's discussions, and in particular in this last panel, was that Mandel's contribution to the revolutionary and working-class movement lay not only in his economic writings, nor even in his broader theoretical and educational works, but that he was, from the time of his joining the underground Belgian section of the FI under the Nazi occupation onwards, actively involved both in the Belgian workers' movement and the in building of the Fourth International.

The day was concluded by brief contributions from Céline Chaudro and David Dessers on behalf of the leadership of the POS/SAP (Belgian section of the FI) and Penny Duggan for the Fourth International leadership, before a preview showing of Chris Den Hond's new film "Ernest Mandel, a Life for the Revolution".