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Tribute to Alain Krivine

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

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**We were five brothers: Gérard, Jean-Michel, Roland, Alain and me. There is only one left and I happen to be that one. Hard to have become the brother... of no one.**

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

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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

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