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# **Farewell to a warm and beloved comrade - Jos Geudens died unexpectedly in Kenya**

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On Tuesday, March 9, our friend and comrade Jos Geudens suddenly died in Kenya. Shortly after waking up, he felt ill. He was transported to the hospital, but to no avail. Jos Geudens was active for forty years active in the ranks of the Fourth International and its Belgian section, SAP / LCR. He was a passionate revolutionary militant who connected major international solidarity projects with daily political work in his school, community, union and city. Jos was 62 years old.

In Antwerp and far beyond, Jos Geudens was a known and respected political militant. He started his political life in the second half of the 60's, within the young socialists of Deurne, a red bastion. Around 1970, he chose -being impressed by the political ideas of Ernest Mandel- the Fourth International; a choice to which he would remain loyal until the end of his life. He was a convinced Marxist, but was never lost in dogmatism. During the long years that he was politically active, comradeship and solidarity always prevailed in his life.

## **ACOD Education**

Jos has been active in various fields. As a teacher, he was primarily active as a militant within the trade union of education workers, ACOD in Antwerp. He was also involved in the movement for a new revolutionary critical pedagogy of the Education Action Group. He applied these new educational methods enthusiastically in his classes. He inspired generations of young people for a warm solidarity and for independent and critical thinking. Within ACOD he was one of the holders of the strong left wing, which constituted the majority of the Board of ACOD after the strikes in September 1983. Within this administration, he was a militant with his relentless enthusiasm and bright, driven interventions, which made many teachers politically conscious and made them involved in the trade union movement.

## **International solidarity**

Jos Geudens actively organized many international solidarity projects: solidarity with unions in Poland in '81, with the Nicaraguan revolution in '83, Workers Aid Project for Bosnia, the campaign for the abolition of the debt of the Third World (Kodewes) in the 90s, ... Jos also organized several solidarity campaigns with Palestine over the past decades. The fight against fascism and racism and the rise of Vlaams Blok was for him, of course, of great human and political importance. He was active in Hand in Hand, Charta 91, Antwerpen Helemaal Anders and also in his district and in the neighborhood committee Borgerhout Beter Bekeken. His last school, in which he taught, was the primary Omni-Mundo, a school where mostly children of immigrants go in Antwerp-North. Through the school he came into contact with many undocumented children and their families. This led to a tremendous commitment to the fate of these people and especially those children. He was the driving force and spokesman of the movement of undocumented children and co-founder of UDEP (the Association of sans papiers) and BastA!, which struggles against social exclusion in Antwerp North.

## **Ernest Mandel**

Jos Geudens was an admirer of Ernest Mandel. It was an honor for him when he could deal for several years, right after Mandel's death, with the full expansion of the Ernest Mandel Foundation. Jos was a passionate militant, but was also a very good reader. It is not an exaggeration to say that he devoured books. He was also a man with a rich cultural interest and a close follower of cinema. Yet he was no table jumper, let alone a political barker. On the contrary, it was endearing how modest he was despite the large back bag with knowledge and experience.

## **Enjoying Africa**

Jos also represented a type of militancy that not only commanded respect in his own ranks. His unwavering dedication, his infectious laughter, his continued daily struggle against all forms of exploitation and oppression, in his own street or elsewhere in the world, made him a widely respected political personality.

Jos died in Kenya. In 2006 he went to pre-pension and he chose to move to Africa. "Enjoying my retirement and enjoying Africa", he was saying. But, he would not be himself if he lacked beautiful projects, projects including children. So, he set up a computer class in a district of Mombasa for the local kids with the computers he collected in Belgium and he opened Cinema Paradiso, which somewhat improvised cinema for the children of the neighborhood who often had at home neither television nor electricity. He had a website and newsletter with reports from Kenya, "Greetings from Mombasa", and he was very active on Facebook. In recent days he has built a small network behind his computer against the violent, US-led, anti-abortion and anti-gay movement in Kenya.

Jos, in February 2010 made a visit to his beloved city, Antwerp. He was still present among others in a political debate about the climate summit in Copenhagen and solidarity demonstration with the Opel workers. His death comes unexpectedly. All the deaths are early, but it was too early for Jos. But when we look back we see a full and meaningful life.

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