

# Funeral - Tributes to Alain Krivine

Monday 25 April 2022, by [BESANCENOT Olivier](#), [Fourth International](#), [KRIVINE Hubert](#), [KRIVINE Michèle](#), [MERLO Alex](#), [MICHALOUX Charles](#), [TOUSSAINT Éric](#) (Date first published: 21 April 2022).

**Tributes at Alain Krivine's funeral on 21 March, 2022, Père-Lachaise cemetery, Paris.**

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## **"To hold on as he held on, optimism of the will had to prevail"**

### **MICHÈLE KRIVINE**

*I wanted to begin this tribute to Alain with a prelude by Bach played by Rostropovich, because he loved classical music and especially stringed instruments. Having a brother who played the violin very well and coming from a music-loving family explain why classical music was a daily part of his life.*

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.

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

## **HUBERT KRIVINE**

*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 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.

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## **“Keep the sense of commitment as a banner”**

### **OLIVIER BESANCENOT**

I remember the first meeting where I came to listen to Alain. I must have been 15 years old, and my life turned upside down. The sincerity of his discourse, his ardour and his conclusion on "the revolution that sets right a system that has been turned upside down" had definitely won me over. I wanted to be part of that fight. He was dashing, refused to take himself seriously while defending ideas that were serious in more ways than one. His interests were based only on his convictions, and this was felt at first sight. The opposite of the careerist politician. And already, at the time, this authenticity was a real breath of fresh air.

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 Schwartzberg. 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.

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## **“Alain made the construction of the Fourth International his life's project”**

### **ALEX MERLO on behalf of the Bureau of the Fourth International**

*I come to bring condolences from all the organizations of the Fourth International to the family, loved ones and comrades of Alain Krivine.*

I met Alain in 2008 when he came to Madrid for a meeting on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> 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!"

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

### **CHARLES MICHALOUX**

*First of all, I would like to thank Michèle Krivine who invited me to speak here. And above all to tell her of our affection and our gratitude for her righteousness and strength, which supported Alain to the end and allowed him to pass peacefully, in a difficult situation, surrounded by his family.*

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.

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## **Alain Krivine was an authentic internationalist revolutionary**

### **ÉRIC TOUSSAINT**

*Alain Krivine was an exceptional militant, totally committed to the revolutionary struggle in his country and on the international level. He had many qualities, including an unshakeable will to fight against injustice, for social emancipation and for the end of all forms of oppression.*

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.

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## **P.S.**

• IVP. 21 March 2022:

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?rubrique377>