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# To Daniel Bensaïd, from the world

Saturday 23 January 2010, by [ANTENTAS Josep Maria](#), [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 23 January 2010).

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Pierre, my deepest condolence for Daniel Bensaïd.

We are also sad about his passing.

**Yen** (Philippines)

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## Korea

As we commemorate the passing of Daniel Bensaïd, who spent his whole life for workers, the people and revolution –

To Bensaïd, a comrade who devoted himself to awakening workers and the people through revolutionary theory and untiring development of revolution. We could only know you through interviews, writings and the history of the NPA.

We have flown about 12 hours by plane from South Korea. We have come here to France to right the wrongs of a shameless French transnational called Valeo, which has pushed the lives of 500 workers and family members into precarity in order to increase Valeo capital's profits. Our demands are "withdraw the liquidation plan, normalize operations of the plant in Korea."

In Korea, there are many movement martyrs who have devoted their lives to the struggle for the right to livelihood of workers and the people and who have passed away resisting the strong repression of capital and the regime. At every gathering we pay tribute to the intentions of those who came before us and renew our resolution to carry forward the struggle. To commemorate comrade Bensaïd in the same way we remember the meaning of Korean movement martyrs while promising to inscribe their meaning into our hearts, we offer "The Marching Song of the People" as a commemoration.

## ***Marching Song of the People***

*Without love, without fame, without name,  
but a passionate oath for life –  
Though comrades vanish and leave behind  
only a banner fluttering in the wind –  
We shall not waver till the new day dawns.*

Time and tide may flow on  
but the mountains and streams will know  
And awake, raising up a great outcry  
March onward, continue forward!  
March onward, carry on!

We resolve to struggle till a new day dawns, the day that workers and the people have been dreaming of together with all the comrades here who have gathered here to commemorate comrade Bensaid. Though he has passed on, his dream of revolution and his affection for the people of the world will live on forever in our hearts.

**From: Korean Metal Workers' Union (KMWU-KCTU) Struggle Mission to France for the Withdrawal of the Liquidation of Valeo Compressor Korea and for Normalization of the Plant**

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**USA**

The Political Committee of Solidarity joins our comrades in the NPA and the Fourth International (FI) in mourning the death of Daniel Bensaid. Bensaid's unswerving commitment to both revolutionary working class political activity and Marxist intellectual work is an example to revolutionaries across the world.

Most of his generation— the “generation of '68”— abandoned revolutionary politics as a youthful indiscretion, and embraced successful careers in academia, mainstream politics and the professions. Bensaid remained an active revolutionary— helping to lead both the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR) in France and the Fourth International. Even after leaving the formal leadership of the LCR and FI, Bensaid continued to play an active role in educating new generations of revolutionaries across the capitalist world, and was a central figure in the LCR's transformation into the NPA in the past two years.

Bensaid was also committed to the development of a critical Marxism for the 21<sup>st</sup> century— what he described as his “open dogmatism.” He steadfastly defended the intellectual and theoretical accomplishments of revolutionary Marxism— the centrality of strategy and political struggle, the rejection of the equation of bureaucratic rule with socialism, the key insights of Marx's theory of capitalism. At the same time, he openly engaged with a variety of intellectual and political currents, arguing for a Marxism that did not embrace “inevitable progress,” but instead viewed history as an open and contingent process whose outcome was determined by collective, human practice.

Daniel Bensaid's death is a loss for revolutionaries around the world. While we mourn his passing, we embrace his political, organizational and intellectual legacy in our struggles for working class and popular power.

**The Political Committee of Solidarity**

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## **Memorial message on the death of Daniel Bensaïd**

### **To the Comrades of the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste and the Fourth International**

Daniel Bensaïd, an outstanding figure of the 1960s rebellious youth and a man who fought for truly democratic-socialist and internationalist renewal of the French and international working-class movement, died on January 12, 2010. He represented our protracted and ongoing phase of much uneven and extremely contradictory struggles for a genuine and historical renewal of the international working-class movement, and his death is a great intellectual loss for our French and international cause.

He joined the foundation of the Jeunesse Communiste Révolutionnaire (JCR) in the mid-1960s, and the JCR fought for international solidarity with the Vietnamese popular liberation struggle against the US military intervention. As a leading member of the JCR, he participated the May-68 movement of campus and factory occupations, and he joined the foundation of the Ligue Communiste (LC), a new French section of the Fourth International (FI), and its succeeding organization of the Ligue Communiste Re'volutionnaire (LCR).

The May-68 campus and factory occupations and the foundation of the LC were the beginning of the ongoing, protracted renewal process of the French working-class movement, and its current stage is represented by the formation of a new and significant class-struggle trade-union movement, independent of the reformist CFDT and CGT, and the foundation of the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (NPA) with 10,000 members. He participated in this whole process as a leadership member of the LC-LCR, and he proved himself to be a splendid and much competent militant who could combine uncompromising, principled positions of the revolutionary Marxism on the one hand and very much flexible approaches to the constantly changing situation and concrete day-to-day problems of the united-front tactics on the other. He was obliged to leave the day-to-day leadership body due to his serious disease in the mid-1990s, but he never ceased contributing for the LCR's political and organizational orientations and judgements.

In the late 1970s, Bensaïd expanded his activities internationally and began to participate the FI's leadership activity regularly. He played an important role especially in the developments of the FI Latin-American organizations in the 1980s. In the same decade, the FI faced a serious political threat from the leadership of the US Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which asserted that Trotsky's system of political theories with the theory of permanent revolution as its axis had been a system of sectarianism, with the implication that the FI had been doomed to be a definite sectarian failure from the outset. However, together with the late Ernest Mandel, Bensaïd stood in the forefront of the polemic against the tendency represented by the US SWP leadership, defending the historical continuity of the Fourth International and the theory of permanent revolution.

The Stalinized Soviet Union as a reactionarily deformed state of transition and its Eastern European bloc of the similarly Stalinized states were thrown into their processes of final destruction at the end of the 1980s, and the whole international working-class situation entered a historically new period. At the 14<sup>th</sup> FI world congress of 1995, Bensaïd himself characterized this turn as the end of an historical epoch of the international working-class movement that the First World War and the Russian revolution had opened. Problems of new reorganization of the working class and other oppressed social forces were posed under the new stage of globalization/financialization of the capitalist world economy. The reorganization process would be extremely empirical necessarily and much protracted internationally.

The rebuilding of the working-class and popular movements should be projected also at the level of critical consciousness in opposition to the existing system of global hierarchical capitalism, too. This

criticism should be social, political and cultural, that is, overall, and it should be a systematic renewal of the revolutionary Marxism that we had inherited from the past. In this context, Bensaïd confirmed at the 1995 FI world congress as follows: "The problems are real and substantial: consequences of globalization, reorganization of the international division of labor, crisis of the nation-state ... the tasks that confront us are comparable to those the workers movement faced at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when its theoretical and political culture was forged." Precisely at this ideological level of critical consciousness, he carried out his enormous intellectual activities in the last 15 years, even though he got his difficult disease. Bensaïd set out to write and publish at an impressive speed: close to 20 books of various sizes and on various topics in 15 years, from his 1995 book on Marx until his death. (Gilbert Achcar) "Daniel set himself the task of checking the solidity of our foundations and passing them on to the young generation. He put his heart and all his strength into it." (François Sabado) The death of Daniel Bensaïd will be felt as our great loss especially at this intellectual level.

Here in Japan, our working-class situation has continued to be very much difficult since the mid-1980s, when the postwar reformist trade-union movement disappeared and the specific Japanese social democracy was disintegrated. Under this unfortunate condition, our weekly paper of formerly "World Revolution" and currently "Kakehashi (Bridge)" has carried Bensaïd's political articles and interviews rather consistently. Apart from our weekly, the "Trotsky Studies", a semiannual publication of the Trotsky Institute (Tokyo), has carried several political essays by Bensaïd.

Bensaïd came to Japan in 2003, and we had informative meetings with him. He seemed to have enjoyed his Japanese visit, and we were pleased to see that he seemed to be rather lively and active in spite of his disease. But he has gone now, and it is much regretful. However, his devotion and tremendous contribution to our international movement will be remembered by our movement here in Japan.

**Kenji Kunitomi**  
**Yohichi Sakai**  
**for the Japan Revolutionary Communist League**

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### **In memory of Daniel Bensaïd**

Dear Bureau

In the Danish SAP we were saddened by the death of comrade Daniel Bensaïd. Today our political bureau adopted this text in recognition of the work of Bensaïd.

Comradely greetings  
on behalf of the PB of SAP-DK  
Peter S

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The Danish section of the Fourth International,  
Socialistisk Arbejderparti (SAP - Socialist

Workers' Party) was very saddened to learn the terrible news of the death of comrade Daniel Bensaïd. We want to express our condolences to his family and to all his friends and comrades.

Daniel has contributed hugely to the development of the Fourth International and more widely to the thinking of the radical left internationally. Daniel has through his many books, articles and talks been an important force in updating and reformulating Marxism. His undogmatic approach to Marxism has inspired generations of activists, who wish not only to understand, but also to change, the world.

Many young sympathisers of the Fourth International have come to know Daniel at the yearly international youth camps. Here we have been inspired by Daniel's knowledge, insight and ability to analyse concrete challenges and tasks with Marxist tools. His ability to communicate complicated matters in an understandable way was amazing. But Daniel has also touched many of us by his exceptional human qualities. He would take the time to sit and discuss with anybody and has always taken our comments serious, while also taking active part in practical work

Inspired by the words by Daniel Bensaïd we will carry on the struggle for an international socialist revolution!

Comradely greetings,

**Socialistisk Arbejderparti - Danish section of the Fourth Internationalism  
Political Bureau**

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Daniel Bensaïd finns inte längre bland oss,  
han var den sorts människa som Bertolt Brecht hänvisade till...

*Det finns människor som kämpar en dag och de är bra  
Det finns människor som kämpar ett år och de är bättre  
Det finns människor som kämpar många år och de är mycket bra  
Men det finns människor som kämpar hela livet och de är outhärliga  
Sedan han blev medveten kämpade han hela sitt liv, ända in i det sista.  
Det är hans politiska och filosofiska testamente; vi kommer att kämpa så länge \_ det är nödvändigt,  
eftersom det är outhärligt*

**Socialistiska Partiet**

**Suecia**

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rezados/as companheiros/as,

Escrevo-lhes para manifestar minhas profundas condolências pela perda de Daniel Bensaid; perda profunda para todo pensamento emancipatório, humanista e socialista.

Seu companheirismo e a sua solidariedade sempre foram marcantes. Perdemos muito, todos e todas, lutadores em várias partes do mundo. Sua obra, entretanto, ficará!

Peço, por favor, que transmitam aos seus companheiros, parentes e amigos mais próximos, meus sentimentos e espero que possam confortar a família de Daniel Bensaid nesse momento tão difícil.

**Ricardo Antunes - BRASIL**

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Camarada:

He concertado con los compañeros simpatizantes de la IV acá en Colombia este texto que espero que por lo menos lo anuncien mañana en el homenaje a Daniel por parte del NPA. Va en el anexo. No sabes lo que me ha dolido su muerte. Lo admiraba y apreciaba muchísimo. Sabía de su gravedad desde hace varios meses. Me lo comentó Ernesto con quien mantengo correspondencia escasa y a pesar de que anda en una línea muy sectaria al igual que Charle André. Todos eramos concientes desde hace un década que nos dejaría pronto y que quizás por ello escribía de manera obsesiva, como para dejar constancia de todas sus preocupaciones políticas. Pero aceptar su muerte es profundamente doloroso. En mi caso lo considero como una de las personas decisivas en mi formación política. Hablar con el cuando iba a las reuniones de la IV era un placer que me abría puertas en la política y en el marxismo. Además como tu lo resaltas en la declaración de la IV era sencillo, amigable. Creo que Bensaid no tiene razón cuando dice que ha muerto el que hasta el 12 de Enero era el intelectual marxista vivo más importante y tú bien sabes que en nuestro movimiento estamos muy lejos del culto a la personalidad.

Iré al congreso. Ya estoy haciendo los trámites. Allá hablaremos despacio. El tiquete los estoy tramitando saliendo el sábado 20 mediodía y regresando el Lunes 1 de Marzo en la tarde.

Coincide con lo programado?

**Abrazos—Daniel Libreros**

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Estimados compañeros y compañeras:

Les hacemos llegar este sencillo recordatorio en homenaje al camarada Daniel Bensaïd. Reciban todos y todas un gran abrazo y saludos revolucionarios.

Faternalmente

## **Tendencia Socialista Revolucionaria de Chile**

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### **Al NPA y a la Cuarta Internacional**

Estimados compañeros y compañeras:

Hace pocos días que nos enteramos de la desgraciada noticia del fallecimiento del compañero Daniel Bensaïd.

A través de estas líneas les hacemos llegar a Uds. nuestras más sinceras condolencias, extensivas a los familiares y amigos de Daniel, así como a toda la militancia de vuestras organizaciones.

Aunque hemos militado en organizaciones y corrientes internacionales distintas, reconocemos en Daniel Bensaïd a un destacado cuadro e intelectual trotskista, oriundo de aquella camada del mayo de 1968, que puso toda su vida y su energía en función de construir una herramienta para la revolución socialista en Francia y en el mundo.

En estos últimos años, Uds. y nosotros nos hemos ido encontrando en diferentes eventos, recomenzado las relaciones e iniciado un intercambio sobre la posibilidad de un reagrupamiento internacional de los revolucionarios. Sobre éste y otros temas de interés en común, algunos de nosotros tuvimos el gusto de conversar con Daniel en París, en ocasión del congreso de fundación del NPA.

Con la convicción de que el mejor homenaje a su memoria es redoblar la militancia, reciban Uds. un muy fraternal abrazo de nuestra parte,

**Alejandro Bodart, Sergio Garcia y Pablo Vasco**  
**por la Dirección Nacional del MST-Argentina**

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## **Daniel Bensaïd, estratega melancólico**

**Josep Maria Antentas**  
**miembro de la revista *Viento Sur***

El pasado 12 de enero murió Daniel Bensaïd. Fue uno de los fundadores de la JCR francesa en 1966 y de la LCR en 1969, organización de la que sería dirigente hasta los años noventa, en paralelo a sus responsabilidades en la dirección de la IV Internacional. En su figura convergían, de forma excepcional, un dirigente político y un intelectual de primer nivel.

Desde los años noventa, enfermo, dedicó sus esfuerzos al trabajo teórico. En un momento de capitulaciones y desconcierto, su voz fue una referencia imprescindible. Acometió una inmensa tarea de renovación del pensamiento marxista, dejando una vasta obra de más de treinta libros escritos con un estilo inimitable de gran calidad literaria.

Dedicó gran parte de su trabajo al estudio de Marx, ofreciendo una lectura innovadora e estimulante. Posiblemente su obra más significativa sea *Marx l'intempestif* (1995, publicado en castellano en 2003 por Herramienta), y su volumen complementario *La Discordance des temps* (1995). *Marx intempestif* muestra una interpretación de Marx que rompe con el determinismo y el cientifismo propios del marxismo dogmático organizada en "tres críticas": crítica de la razón histórica, de la razón económica y del positivismo científico. Empezando por la negación de lo que no es la obra de Marx, "una filosofía especulativa de la historia, una sociología empírica de las clases o una ciencia positiva de la economía", nos la presenta como "una teoría crítica de la lucha social y de la transformación del mundo".

Entre sus influencias intelectuales sobresale Walter Benjamín, a quien consagró el libro *Walter Benjamin Sentinelle Mesianique* (1990). Bajo su impronta Bensaïd abraza una lectura no determinista de la historia, entendida como un camino de ramificaciones y bifurcaciones de resultado incierto. En su pensamiento, cobra relevancia la figura del "topo" "metáfora de quien camina obstinadamente, de las resistencias subterráneas y de las irrupciones repentinas" y la "noción estratégica de crisis" en tanto que "un momento de decisión y de verdad, cuando la historia duda entre un punto de bifurcación" (*Resistencias* publicada por el El Viejo Topo 2006).

Consecuentemente, la razón estratégica y la preocupación para repensar una estrategia revolucionaria para el siglo XXI está en el centro del pensamiento de Bensaïd. En *Le pari melancolique* (1997), en una interpretación marxista de la "apuesta pascaliana" define el compromiso político como una "apuesta razonada sobre el devenir histórico" basada "en el actuar, no en la evidencia de la solución asegurada, sino en la contingencia irreductible de la hipótesis". La apuesta de Bensaïd es, sin duda, una apuesta melancólica por la revolución que "sin imagen ni mayúscula permanece pues necesaria en tanto que idea indeterminada de este cambio (...). No como modelo, esquema prefabricado, sino como hipótesis estratégica y horizonte regulador."

Fiel a estas preocupaciones estratégicas intervino activamente en los debates en el seno del movimiento "antiglobalización", polemizando con autores como Negri o Holloway, en obras como *Changer le monde* (2003, publicado en castellano por La Catarata). En una de sus últimos libros, *Éloge de la Politique Profane* (2009, publicada en castellano por Península) analiza las transformaciones de las categorías políticas de la Modernidad, el "eclipse de la política" y de la "razón estratégica" al filo de la ofensiva neoliberal, y discute las diversas "utopías contemporáneas", propias de los periodos posteriores a las grandes derrotas, "donde lo posible y lo necesario ya no tienen puntos en contacto".

Bensaïd solía definir la obra de Marx como "una herencia sin propietarios, ni manual de instrucciones. Una herencia en busca de autores". Así debemos entender también la obra que él nos ha legado.

(Publicado en *Diagonal* nº118)

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