

Fourth International

A seminar on Daniel Bensaïd

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Daniel Bensaïd. MAY 68 40th anniversary. LCR Meeting in Paris. Photothèque Rouge/JMB

It is two years since Daniel Bensaïd left us. [[16200] To mark the occasion, the Fourth International secretariat organized a seminar on his thought and action. This was not a big public initiative but three days of work to look further into a series of questions tackled by the theoretician, philosopher and political militant that Daniel was.

Some thirty people met in Amsterdam on January 13th, 14th and 15th, 2012, in the International institute of Research and Education (IIRE): intellectuals, militants, friends, and his companion. They were all comrades who had liked, worked, thought, and been active in close collaboration with Daniel. Other close friends and comrades who had wished to participate could not in the end come to the Netherlands.

There was a strong international dimension to this seminar, with the presence of leaders from revolutionary or anticapitalist left organisations from Brazil (PSOL), Portugal (Bloco de Esquerda), Britain (SWP), France (NPA), Belgium (LCR-SAP), Italy (Sinistra Critica), the Spanish State (Izquierda anticapitalista) and the Basque Country.

It was also international because Daniel's thought - since the 1960s - always started from "a world vision", a dialectical perception of class struggles on a worldwide scale.

Political philosophy, theory, experiences, organisational responsibilities: it is difficult to separate them in Daniel's history and work, they overlap so much in his theoretical work and his political activity, in building or rebuilding an open and critical revolutionary Marxism. The work of "refoundation" he started in the 1980s and continued until the end of his life, a point that many of the contributors underlined.

We nevertheless tried during the three days during, to alternate theoretical questions and political experiences.

We started with a series of contributions on "Daniel's Marxism", presented by Samy Johsua, Philippe Pignarre, Michael Löwy, Cinzia Arruzza, Alex Callinicos, Philippe Corcuff and Carlos Carujo of Portugal.

Catherine Samary, for her part, introduced a discussion on Daniel's texts concerning the Stalinist

counter-revolution and the “strengths of Communism” which could make rebuilding socialist thought possible.

Alain Krivine underlined his common political experience with Daniel, in May 68 and the years that followed, and the importance of the organisational responsibilities that he assumed. This was also the occasion to note the major role he played in education work in France, the youth camps in Europe and the international sessions of the Amsterdam Institute of – all undertaken in the perspective of renewing political leaderships.

This discussion was continued with remarks on the relations between Daniel and our sister organizations in the revolutionary upsurges in Portugal, in Euzkadi and Spain in the mid-1970s.

Joao Machado, today a leader of the PSOL, reconsidered the links between Daniel and Brazil over 30 years, and the help he brought, as much at the moment when revolutionary groups and militants gathered to build the Brazilian section of the 4th International as during the course of the historical experience of building a mass workers’ party framework of the of the Brazilian Workers’ Party. Machado also explained the lessons of the degeneration of this party into a social liberal party, and the crisis that divided our Brazilian section.

Pierre Rousset gave a presentation on the place of the theory of the permanent revolution in Daniel’s theoretical and political work, as well as on the questions raised today, at the time of a “power swing” in the world, with the emergence of new world powers and of the Arab revolutions.

Esther Vivas, of Izquierda Anticapitalista, examined the continuities and discontinuities between the global justice movement and the Indignant movement, in particular in the Spanish state, in the light of Daniel’s most recent writings.

Lastly, the seminar ended in with a contribution of François Sabado, member of the FI secretariat, on Daniel’s political action for our movement and his contribution to our perspectives for building the International.

After this seminar, whose contributions and discussions were of good quality, the wish of all and all is to continue. To continue to work on the questions raised by Daniel, to transmit his ideas, the memory of its combat. A first decision was made immediately: to publish the principal contributions to the seminar on various dimensions Daniel’s thought as a book.

Sophie, his partner, also presented the project of a website devoted to Daniel - not only his texts, but a living site, which makes the link between the fundamental texts of Daniel and the developments in contemporary thought and political action.

Lastly, we learned the excellent news, that Carmen Castillo, former leader of the Chilean MIR, partner of Miguel Enriquez, and well-known film director has managed to raise funds to make a film about Daniel and militant involvement: an advance on box office receipts has been obtained from the National Center of French cinema.

In short, a lot of work, not only to keep Daniel’s thought alive but, in these difficult times, to try to transmit a capital which can help the current and future revolutionary generations.

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P.S.

* Translation International Viewpoint <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/>

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