

# AN IMPATIENT LIFE

A MEMOIR

**DANIEL BENSÄID**

FOREWORD BY TARIQ ALI



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# AN IMPATIENT LIFE: A POLITICAL MEMOIR

DANIEL BENZAÏD

*Translated by David Fernbach*

*With a Foreword by Tariq Ali*



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# *Foreword: A Letter from Atlantis*

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by  
Tariq Ali

Successful revolutions always try to reproduce themselves. They usually fail. Napoleon carried the Enlightenment on the end of a bayonet, but English reaction, Spanish nationalism and Russian absolutism, finally defeated him. The triumphant Bolsheviks, disgusted by social-democratic capitulation at the advent of the First World War, orchestrated a split within the working class and formed the Communist International to extend the victory in Petrograd to the entire world. They were initially more successful than the French. Premature uprisings wrecked the revolution in Germany, destroying its finest leaders – Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and many others – and driving the German landed and bourgeois elite into Hitler's embrace. In Spain, a united front of the European fascist powers (passively assisted by Britain and France) brought Franco to power. In France and Italy, the Communist platoons grew into huge battalions during the Second World War and exercised an unchallenged hegemony within the working class for three decades, but without any meaningful strategy to dismantle capitalism. Here the close alliance with the narrowly defined needs of the Soviet state precluded any such possibility. Communists in China and Vietnam proved more successful, for a while. The Cuban revolution, the last till now, was no exception. Its leaders, too, were convinced that careful organisation and a handful of armed cadres could succeed anywhere in South America. It was a tragic error, costing the lives of Che Guevara and hundreds of others across the continent.

The Stalinisation of the Soviet Union and the execution of most of Lenin's closest comrades led to the creation of dissident Communist groupuscules self-defined as Trotskyists. From Europe to China, these included some of the finest minds in their respective countries. South America, by contrast, tended to produce slightly eccentric equivalents. Britain had never experienced a major Communist party. It made up for this by producing some of the most virulent sects within the Trotskyist framework. The late historian E.P. Thompson had one of these in mind when he described English Trotskyists as little more than stunted opposites of Stalinism, who had in their own practice reproduced the structures pioneered by those they claimed to oppose.

In France, where dissidence fermented inside the ideological vats of the Parti Communiste Français, the results were different. The intellectual and political culture was rigid, but its influence on the French left-wing intelligentsia as a whole provoked debates and discussions that were on a higher theoretical level than elsewhere (with the exception of Italy). After the Cuban revolution and during the Algerian war of independence, many young intellectuals inside the student wing of the PCF began to find its politics stifling. This led to the creation of the Jeunesse Communiste Revolutionnaire and its merger with the least sectarian wing of Trotskyism, led by Pierre Frank and Ernest Mandel. Reading this book brought back many nice memories of comrades who formed the core of the JCR, some of whom are still good friends. The first half of these memoirs also constitutes the intellectual history of the 68 generation. It's amazing now to be reminded how many of those active in the political and cultural establishment of contemporary France were once on the far left. The JCR's big rival within the Trotskyist world was the

Organisation Communiste Internationaliste, combining a rigid sectarianism with an elastic opportunism. Some of its central figures were asked by Mitterrand to join the Socialist Party. He needed them to combat the PCF and its residual Stalinism. Who better to approach than the OC. And so Jospin became the prime minister of France. Running into Krivine at some occasion, Jospin shook his hand warmly and whispered in his ear: 'I always told your lot that we would take power before you'.

It is not easy to write in times of defeat, in an epoch where the triumph of Capital (the real thing, not the great book) has frightened the young away from posing an effective challenge via a carefully considered alternative. Those who assumed, stupidly, that with the fall of the Soviet Union the road was clear for a real, pure socialism, gravely underestimated the tectonic shift. Bensaïd was not one of this crowd. He grappled with real problems till the very end of his life. Ernest Mandel's optimism of the will and optimism of the intellect had created within the ranks of the European far left a belief that revolution was on the horizon. The events of 1968 fuelled such a view. We were all believers. As Daniel writes, it was this belief that burnt out the large Spanish group of Trotskyists. They were demobilised by the peaceful transition from a right-wing republic to a social-democratic monarchy. The country in Europe that came closest to a revolution was Portugal, but here too, a clever social democrat outwitted (DB might have called it *debordement* in unity in action to outflank and overtake) the groups to his left.

Reading much of this material today is like delving into the archives of Atlantis. With official Communism dead, how could its Trotskyist offspring survive? There were two solutions: the first was to launch a new broader party of the left, the second to retreat into a bubble of its own making and insist that everyone sing from the same hymn-sheet.

So much for the politics, what of the author? Daniel Bensaïd was one of the most gifted European Marxist intellectuals of his generation. Born in Toulouse in 1946, he was schooled at the Lycées Bellevue and Fermat, but the formative influence was that of his parents and their milieu. His father, Haïm Bensaïd, was a Sephardic Jew from a poor family in Algeria who moved from Mascara to Oran, where he got a job as a waiter in a cafe and after a short spell discovered his real vocation. He trained to be a boxer, becoming the welterweight champion of North Africa.

Daniel's mother, Marthe Starck, was a strong and energetic Frenchwoman from a working-class family in Blois. At eighteen she moved to Oran. She met the boxer. They fell in love. The French *colons* were deeply shocked and tried hard to persuade her not to marry a Jew. She was, they warned, bound to get VD and have abnormal children. But Marthe was a strong-willed woman and as Bensaïd records in his memoirs, capable of taking on anyone, including, much later, her son's collaborationist headmaster when he attempted to discipline the boy for his anti-fascist opinions.

With France occupied by the German fascists and the bulk of the country's elite in collaborationist mode, with its own capital at Vichy, the French administration fell into line. As a Jew, Daniel's father was arrested and held at the Drancy internment camp pending deportation to Auschwitz. But unlike his two brothers, he survived, thanks largely to his wife who had an official Vichy certificate stating her 'non-membership of the Jewish race'. In this affecting book, Daniel notes that these barbarities had taken place on French soil only a few decades prior to 1968. Le Bar des Amis, he writes, was a cosmopolitan location. Spanish refugees, Italian anti-fascists, former Resistance fighters, workers, post workers, railway workers. The local Communist Party branch held meetings there. Given his mother's fierce Republican and Jacobin views (when a relative, after watching a syrupy French TV programme on the British monarchy, expressed doubts regarding

the guillotining of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette, Marthe did not speak to him for ten years), would have been odd if young Bensaïd had become a monarchist. His father died of cancer in 1960.

Angered by the massacre of demonstrators at the Metro Charonne in 1961 (ordered by Maurice Papon, chief of police and former Nazi collaborator), Daniel joined the Union of Communist Students. But he soon became irritated by party orthodoxy and joined a left opposition within the Union organised by Henri Weber (currently a Socialist Party senator in the upper house) and Alain Krivine. The Cuban revolution and Che Guevara's odyssey did the rest. The dissidents were expelled from the Party in 1966. That same year, Bensaïd was admitted to the École Normale Supérieure in Saint-Cloud and moved to Paris. Here he helped found the Jeunesse Communiste Révolutionnaire (JCR), young dissidents inspired by Che and Trotsky, which later morphed into the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR).

In 1968, together with Daniel Cohn-Bendit, he formed the 22 March Movement in Nanterre, the organisation that helped to detonate the uprising which shook France in May–June of that year. Bensaïd was at his best explaining ideas to large crowds of students and workers. He could hold an audience spellbound, as I witnessed in his native Toulouse in 1969 when we shared a platform at a rally of ten thousand people to support Alain Krivine's presidential campaign. His penetrating analysis was never presented in a patronising way, whatever the composition of the audience. His ideas derived from classical Marxism – Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, as was typical in those days – but his way of looking at and presenting them was his own. His philosophical and political writings have a lyrical ring – at particularly tedious central committee meetings he was seen immersed in Proust – and resist easy translation into English.

As a leader of the LCR and the Fourth International to which it was affiliated, he travelled a great deal to South America, especially Brazil, and played an important part in helping to organise the Workers Party (PT) that subsequently came to power under Lula. An imprudent sexual encounter shortened his life. He contracted AIDS and for the last sixteen years of his life was dependent on drugs to keep him going, but with fatal side effects: a cancer that finally killed him.

Physically, he was a shadow of his former self, but the intellect was not affected and he produced over a dozen books on politics and philosophy. He wrote of his Jewishness and that of many other comrades, emphasising how this cultural identity had never led him, nor most of them, to follow the path of a blind and unthinking Zionism that was also deeply reactionary. For former Communists turned Zionists, it was Israel now that had to be supported, right or wrong. Daniel disliked identity politics and his last two books – *Fragments mecreants* (An Unbeliever's Discourse) and *Eloge de la politique profane* (In Praise of Secular Politics) – explained how this had become a substitute for serious critical thought. He was France's leading Marxist public intellectual, much in demand on talk shows and frequently writing essays and reviews for *Le Monde* and *Liberation*. At a time when a large section of the French intelligentsia had shifted its terrain and embraced neoliberalism, Bensaïd remained steadfast. Even in the sixties he had avoided the clichés of left-talk; instead, he thought creatively, often questioning the verities of the far left. What would he have made of the travails of the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste – sectarian and economistic, reduced to warring factions, incapable of linking to a larger movement?

If there was a weakness in Daniel it was this: even when he knew that mistakes (some of them serious) were being committed by his organisation, he would never stand up and contest the will of the majority. Whatever else, neither Lenin nor Trotsky were reticent in pointing out, when necessary, that what was being proposed was politically unacceptable. I did put this to him once

He smiled but did not reply. Perhaps he thought that in a climate where Marxism was under heavy siege, it was best to be emollient within his organisation. His project was clear: to help create non-dogmatic, non-religious, non-bullshit Marxism. This was not an easy task in bad times, but as Sebastian Budgen, one of his friends from a younger generation, noted in a moving obituary:

Perhaps most importantly for him, Daniel also doggedly pursued a project of developing Marxist theory by cross-fertilising it with other radical currents (such as those influenced by Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Badiou), and by seeking to transmit in a critical, open but unapologetic manner the wealth of Marxism's past to a younger generation he hoped would forge a future for it.

The last time I met Daniel, a few years ago in his favourite cafe in the Latin Quarter, he was in full flow. The disease had not sapped his will to live or think. Politics was his life-blood. We talked about the social unrest in France and whether it would be enough to bring about serious change. He shrugged his shoulders. 'Perhaps not in our lifetimes, but we carry on fighting. What else is there to do?' This was the spirit that animated his life as it does this book, making it one of the most intelligent and unrepentant accounts of the French far left.

*July 20*



## *Publisher's Note*

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# List of Abbreviations

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AC!	Agir ensemble contre le chômage – radical unemployed rights campaign group which organised a march against unemployment across France in 1994
ALCA	Area de Libre Comercio de America – Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).
ANDEVA	Association nationale de defense des victimes de l’amiante – campaign for the rights of victims of asbestos poisoning.
ATTAC	Association pour la taxation des transactions pour l’aide aux citoyens – Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens, main French ‘alterglobalist’ campaign group.
AZF	AZote Fertilisant – the site in Toulouse of an accidental explosion on 21 September 2001.
CADTM	Comite pour l’annulation de la dette du tiers monde – Committee for the Abolition of Third World Debt.
CAL	Comites d’action lyceens – committees of radical secondary school students founded in December 1967 by dissident Jeunesse Communiste members.
CAPES	Certificat d’aptitude au professorat de l’enseignement du second degre – secondary school teaching diploma.
CEMEA	Centre d’etude des methodes d’education active – organisation promoting ‘active pedagogical’ methods and ‘new education’ more generally.
CERES	Centre d’etudes, de recherche et d’education – left current in the PS around Jean-Pierre Chevenement which sought to trace an authentically socialist path against social democracy and orthodox Communism (with references to Gramsci, Austro-Marxism, etc.). Became the Socialisme et Republique current in 1986, which quit the PS in 1991 to found the MDC.
CERFI	Centre d’etudes, de recherche et de formation institutionnelles – interdisciplinary collective of scholars and activists founded by Felix Guattari in 1967. The journal it published was called <i>Recherches</i> .
CFDT	Confederation française democratique du travail – one of the two largest union confederations in France. Originally a split from the Catholic CFTC, in the 1970s it developed a discourse around <i>autogestion</i> , or self-management, which attracted many far left activists. Now a very centrist and moderate current in the labour movement.
CGT	Confederation generale du travail – union confederation founded in 1895 and originally associated with revolutionary syndicalism. After the reunification with the CGTU, came under the influence of the PCF. Now one of the top two union confederations with a somewhat more militant discourse than the CFDT.
CGTU	Confederation generale du travail unitaire – ‘red union’ split from the CGT that existed between 1921 and 1936.
CNRS	Centre national de la recherche scientifique – main public-funded research centre for both natural and social sciences.
CNT	Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo – Spanish anarcho-syndicalist union confederation.
CORQI	Comite pour la reconstruction de la quatrieme internationale – Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International, Lambertist international

	current, formed after the expulsion of the OCI from the ICFI in 1971.
<b>CUARH</b>	<del>Comite d'urgence anti-repression homosexuelle</del> – campaign group against homophobia that lasted from 1979 to 1987.
<b>DINA</b>	Direccion de Inteligencia Nacional – Chilean secret service under Pinochet.
<b>EDF</b>	Électricite de France – French public electricity company.
<b>EGP</b>	Ejercito guerrillero del pueblo – People's Guerrilla Army, established by Cuban press agency Prensa Latina's founding director Jorge Masetti (like Che Guevara, Argentinian) in 1963 at Salta, Argentina, a province in the Northwest that borders Bolivia, Chile and Paraguay, as part of the preparations for Guevara's Bolivian foco. It dissolved, defeated, in 1964, with the death in the jungle of its founder.
<b>ELN</b>	Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional de Bolivia – National Liberation Army, guerrilla group best known for its relationship with Che Guevara.
<b>ENA</b>	École nationale d'administration – National School of Administration, elite institution which trains future high-level civil servants.
<b>ENSET</b>	École normale superieure de l'enseignement technique – previous name for the École normale superieure at Cachan.
<b>ERP</b>	Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo – armed wing of the PRT.
<b>ETA</b>	Euskadi Ta Askatasuna – Basque Homeland and Freedom, armed wing of the Basque nationalist movement.
<b>FAS</b>	Frente Anti-imperialista y por el Socialismo – Anti-Imperialist and Socialist Front, short-lived convergence of Argentinean revolutionary organisations, 1973–74.
<b>FEN</b>	Federation de l'education nationale – main federation of teachers' unions until the split in 1992 that founded the FSU. Now called UNSA education.
<b>FHAR</b>	Front homosexuel d'action revolutionnaire – Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action, radical gay and lesbian political group founded in 1971 that included Daniel Guerin, Christine Delphy, Rene Scherer and Guy Hocquenghem amongst its members.
<b>FI</b>	Fourth International – founded by Trotsky in 1938. The FI split several times most importantly in 1953, between the International Secretariat of the Fourth International (Michel Pablo, Ernest Mandel, Pierre Frank) and the International Committee of the Fourth International, around the SWP (US) of James P. Cannon. Reunification of the two currents in 1963 in the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI or Usec) took place without the followers of Pablo, Juan Posadas in Latin America, Gerry Healy in the UK, Pierre Lambert in France and other groups. (The Lambertist current internationally still calls itself the 'Fourth International' and is often known as the FI [La Verite] or FI [International Secretariat]). The SWP (US) distanced itself increasingly from the USFI in the 1980s and broke formally from it in 1990. The USFI is organised as follows: the International Committee (previously International Executive Committee), on which sit representatives of all the national sections and sympathising organisations, meets once a year; the International Secretariat (previously United Secretariat) brings together ten to fifteen representatives of the most important sections three or four times a year; the Bureau is the permanent executive and is based in Paris.
<b>FI-IC</b>	Fourth International-International Committee, short-lived regroupment of the Lambertist CORQI, the Morenoite Bolshevik Faction (which split from the USFI in 1979) and the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, from 1980 to 1982.
<b>FLN</b>	Front de liberation nationale – Algerian national liberation movement.

FSU	Federation syndicale unitaire – currently the most important teachers’ union federation in France, often associated with the more ‘militant’ organisations such as the CGT and Solidaires.
FTP	Francs-tireurs et partisans – wing of the French Resistance under the command of the PCF.
FTP-MOI	Francs-tireurs et partisans-main-d’œuvre immigrée – the immigrant unit of the FTP.
FZLN	Frente zapatista de liberación nacional – Zapatista National Liberation Front.
GOP	Gauche ouvrière et paysanne – Workers’ and Peasants’ Left, left-wing current within the PSU in the early 1970s that split in several waves from the latter, to constitute itself independently in 1975. Some members went on to join the Maoists, others the OCT.
GOR	Grupo Obrero Revolucionario – Revolutionary Workers’ Group, split from the Argentinian PRT in 1970 led by Daniel Pereyra.
GPU	Gosudarstvennoye politicheskoye upravlenie – State Political Directorate, forerunner of the KGB. Glavnoye razvedyvatel’noye upravleniye – Main Intelligence Directorate, Soviet foreign military intelligence service.
IA	Izquierda Anticapitalista – section of the USFI in the Spanish state, founded in 2008
IC	Izquierda comunista – group founded by Andreu Nin, later integrated into the POUM.
ICFI	International Committee of the Fourth International, international current of ‘anti-Pabloite’ Trotskyists, founded in 1953, initially grouping together the SWP (US), Gerry Healy’s current (Socialist Labour League, later the Workers Revolutionary Party) and the French Lambertists. In 1963 the SWP and the smaller Austrian, Canadian, Chinese and New Zealand sections of the ICFI agreed to reunite with the ISFI at the World Congress, to form the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. In opposition to this, the ICFI drew in James Robertson (later of the International Spartacist League) and Tim Wohlforth (later the leader of the US ‘Healyite’ organisation). Robertson soon left the ICFI and the Lambertists left in 1971 to found the CORQI.
IG Metall	Industriegewerkschaft Metall – Industrial Union of Metalworkers, Germany.
IIRE	International Institute for Research and Education, based in Amsterdam.
ISFI	International Secretariat of the Fourth International. See FI.
JCR	Jeunesse communiste révolutionnaire – Revolutionary Communist Youth, youth wing of the PCI, founded April 1965. Dissolved officially by the French state in June 1968 but continued to exist informally and fused in April 1969 with the PCI to form the Ligue Communiste, French section of the FI.
LC	Ligue communiste – Communist League, French section of the FI, founded at the Mannheim congress, 5–8 April 1969. Officially dissolved by the French state in June 1973 after the violent demonstration against the Ordre Nouveau meeting.
LCR	Liga Comunista Revolucionaria – Revolutionary Communist League, section of the FI in the Spanish state, founded in 1971. Fused with revolutionary communist split from ETA, to become LCR-ETA(VI). Fused in 1991 with the Maoist organisation Movimiento Comunista to found Izquierda Alternativa (Alternative Left), which broke up in 1993.
LCR	Ligue communiste révolutionnaire – reconstitution (after a two-month existence following the dissolution of the LC as the Front communiste révolutionnaire) of the LC under a new name in 1974. Dissolved itself into the NPA in 2009.

	<b>Liga Internacional de los Trabajadores (Cuarta Internacional) – International Workers’ League (Fourth International), Morenoite international current, founded in 1982 after a dispute with the Lambertists in the Parity Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International, subsequently the FI-IC.</b>
<b>LIT</b>	
<b>MAS</b>	<b>Movimiento al socialismo – Movement towards Socialism, Argentinean Trotskyist party founded by Nahuel Moreno in 1982. Split into many fragments in 1988 and onwards.</b>
<b>MDC</b>	<b>Mouvement des citoyens – Citizens’ Movement, party founded by Jean-Pierre Chevenement in 1993. Rebaptised Mouvement Republicain et Citoyen (MRC) in 2003.</b>
<b>MEDEF</b>	<b>Mouvement des entreprises de France – French employers’ confederation, founded in 1998 to replace the CNPF.</b>
<b>MIR</b>	<b>Movimiento de la izquierda revolucionaria – Movement of the Revolutionary Left, Chilean far left party founded in 1965 as the product of a fusion between various revolutionary groups, including Trotskyists. Viciously repressed during the dictatorship.</b>
<b>MLN-T</b>	<b>Movimiento de liberacion nacional-tupamaros – Tupamaros National Liberation Movement, urban guerrilla movement in Uruguay.</b>
<b>MNEF</b>	<b>Mutuelle nationale des etudiants de France – non-profit mutual insurance company established by the UNEF for the purpose of providing French students with health insurance.</b>
<b>MOI</b>	<b>Main-d’oeuvre immigrée – immigrant workers’ union founded by the CGTU. Created an armed Resistance wing FTP-MOI during Second World War.</b>
<b>MRAP</b>	<b>Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l’amitié entre les peuples – Movement Against Racism and for Friendship between Peoples, anti-racist organisation founded in 1949 by former Resistance fighters and deportees.</b>
<b>MST</b>	<b>Movimiento Socialista de los Trabajadores – Workers’ Socialist Movement, one of the fragments of the break-up of the MAS, founded in 1992.</b>
<b>MTP</b>	<b>Movimiento todos por la patria – All For the Country Movement, Argentinean political and urban guerrilla movement founded by Enrique Gorriaran Merlo in 1986. Organised a major and bloody assault on a military installation in 1989, after which the organisation disappeared.</b>
<b>NAFTA</b>	<b>North American Free Trade Agreement</b>
<b>NKVD</b>	<b>Narodnyy komissariat vnutrennikh del – People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs, successor of the GPU and forerunner of the KGB.</b>
<b>NPA</b>	<b>Nouveau parti anticapitaliste – New Anti-Capitalist Party, founded in 2009 by the fusion of the LCR with a number of smaller groups and a large influx of previously unaffiliated individuals.</b>
<b>OAS</b>	<b>Organisation de l’armée secrete – Organisation of the Secret Army, clandestine anti-Algerian independence group founded in 1961. Organised many terrorist actions against the state and the left until 1965.</b>
<b>OCI</b>	<b>Organisation communiste internationaliste – Internationalist Communist Organisation, Trotskyist party founded in 1965 by Pierre Lambert, who had been expelled from the PCI along with other opponents of the positions of Michel Pablo in 1952. Changed its name to Parti Communiste Internationaliste in 1981, Mouvement pour un Parti des Travailleurs in 1984, Parti des Travailleurs in 1991 and Parti Ouvrier Independant in 2008.</b>
<b>OCT</b>	<b>Organisation communiste des travailleurs – Communist Workers’ Organisation, fusion between the organisation Revolution! (originally from the LC) and members of the GOP in 1976. Broke up in 1981, with a number of</b>

members joining subsequently the LCR.

<del>OLAS</del>	<del>Organizacion Latino Americana de Solidaridad – Organisation of Latin American Solidarity</del>
PCB	Partido Comunista Boliviano – Bolivian Communist Party
PCE	Partido Comunista de Espana – Communist Party of Spain
PCF	Parti communiste français – French Communist Party
	Parti communiste internationaliste – Internationalist Communist Party, French section of the FI, founded in 1944 as a fusion of the three major Trotskyist organisations (but not the Union Communiste Internationaliste, which would later become Lutte Ouvriere). The minority around Pierre Frank expelled the anti-Pablo majority, including Pierre Lambert in 1952. Fused with the JCR in 1969 to create the LC.
PCI	
PDS	Partei des demokratischen Sozialismus – Party of Democratic Socialism, successor to the East German ruling SED party. In 2007, fused with forces from western Germany to found Die Linke.
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
	Partido Obrero Comunista – Communist Workers’ Party, Brazilian far left organisation founded at the end of the 1960s. Its armed wing was called Organizaçao de Combate Marxista-Leninista – Política Operaria (OCML-PO)
POC	Heavily repressed by the military dictatorship and disappeared in the early 1970s.
	Partido Obrero de Unificacion Marxista – Workers’ Party of Marxist Unification, revolutionary organisation in the Spanish state, founded as the fusion between the Trotskyist Communist Left of Spain (Izquierda Comunista de Espana, ICE) and the Workers’ and Peasants’ Bloc (Bloque Obrero y Campesino, BOC) in 1935. Attacked and driven underground by the Communist-led Republican forces in May 1937.
POUM	
PRD	Partido de la Revolucion Democratica – Party of the Democratic Revolution, Mexican centre-left party founded in 1989.
	Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (Argentina) – Workers’ Revolutionary Party, revolutionary organisation founded in 1965 as the fusion of the Revolutionary and Popular Amerindian Front (Frente Revolucionario Indoamericano Popular [FRIP]), led by Francisco Rene Santucho and his brother Mario Roberto Santucho, and Worker’s Word (Palabra Obrera [PO]).
PRT	Was affiliated to the FI between 1968 and 1973. Its armed wing was the ERP. Was heavily repressed and disappeared in 1977.
	Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (Mexico) – the Mexican section of the Fourth International, founded in 1977 as the fusion of the USFI and Morenoite sections. After a tumultuous history, the PRT declined and its remnants were renamed Convergencia Socialista (Socialist Convergence) in 1996.
PRT	
PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Espanol – Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party, Spanish social-democratic party
	Partido Socialismo e Liberdade – Party for Socialism and Freedom, regroupment of several far left forces in Brazil, including those expelled from the PT, founded in 2004.
PSOL	
	Partido Socialista de Trabajadores – Argentinean Socialist Workers’ Party, product of a fusion between Moreno’s PRT-La Verdad and the Socialist Party of Argentina in 1973. Became the MAS in 1983.
PST	
	Partido Socialista dos Trabalhadores Unificado – Unified Socialist Workers’ Party, Brazilian section of the LIT, founded in 1993 as the fusion between the

PSTU	Morenoite Convergencia Socialista and a number of other far left groups.
PSU	Parti socialiste unifié – Unified Socialist Party, socialist party to the left of social democracy founded as a fusion of several groups in 1960. Contained many different tendencies, but the right wing grouped around Michel Rocard joined the Socialist Party in 1974. After a long decline in the late 1970s and the 1980s, the remnants of the PSU joined with other forces to become what is now known as Les Alternatifs.
PT	Parti des travailleurs (France) – see OCI
PT	Partido del Trabajo (Mexico) – Labour Party, centre-left party founded in 1990. In alliance with the PRD.
PT	Partido dos Trabalhadores (Brazil) – Workers’ Party, main centre-left party in Brazil.
PtyD	Partido del Trabajo y el Desarrollo – Party for Work and Development, moderate Argentinean party launched in 2005 by Enrique Haroldo Gorriaran Merlo, previously of the PRT-ERP and MTP.
RPF	Rassemblement du peuple français – Rally of the French People, party founded by the General de Gaulle in 1947. Disbanded in 1955.
RSDLP	Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party
SAPD	Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands – left-wing breakaway from German social democracy in 1931, which also included Communist dissidents and was associated with the International Revolutionary Marxist Centre. Most famous member was Willy Brandt.
SDEUM	Sindicato Democrático de Estudiantes Universitarios de Madrid – Democratic Students’ Union of Madrid University
SDS	Sozialistischer deutscher Studentenbund – German Socialist Student Union, founded in 1946 as the university arm of the SPD but expelled in 1961. Became leading force in the Außerparlamentarische Opposition (APO; ‘Extraparliamentary Opposition’) and anti-war movement. Rudi Dutschke was the most famous of its figures. Disbanded in 1970.
SFIO	Section française de l’internationale ouvrière – French Section of the Workers’ International, French socialist party, product of a fusion under pressure from the Second International in 1905 of the French Socialist Party and the Socialist Party of France. Suffered a major split in 1920 at the Tours Congress with the foundation of the French Communist Party. Discredited especially by its behaviour during the Fourth Republic, it was replaced by the Parti Socialiste, founded in 1969.
SNES	Syndicat national de l’enseignement de second degré – major secondary schoolteachers’ union, part of the FSU.
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands – Social Democratic Party of Germany
SUD-PTT	Solidaires unitaires démocratiques – Postes télégrammes et télécommunications – independent left trade union well implanted in the postal and telecoms sector. A member of the left confederation Union syndicale Solidaires.
SWP	Socialist Workers’ Party (USA)
UEC	Union des étudiants communistes – Union of Communist Students, student organization of the PCF. Reactivated in 1956, it quickly became a pole of gravitation for different dissident groups and there were major waves of expulsions in 1965 and 1966. Was severely weakened as a force after May 1968.

due to the competition from organizations of the far left.

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UFF	<b>Union des femmes françaises – Union of French Women</b> , women's organization founded in 1944 and led by Jeannette Vermeersch, wife of Maurice Thorez, general secretary of the PCF, and known for her prudish and conservative attitudes towards sexuality, contraception and abortion. Renamed Femmes solidaires in 1998.
UFRGS	<b>Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul – Federal University of Rio Grande del Sul</b> in Brazil
UGOCP	<b>Union General Obrero, Campesino y Popular – General Workers, Peasants' and Peoples' Union</b> , Mexican peasants' organization founded in 1986.
UGS	<b>Union de la gauche socialiste – Union of the Socialist Left</b> , convergence, founded in 1957, of dissident SFIO members, left Catholics, intellectuals (Edgar Morin, Claude Bourdet, Gilles Martinet) and figures from the Trotskyist movement (Yvan Craipeau, Pierre Naville, Marcel Bleibtreu and Michel Lequenne). Participated in the creation of the PSU in 1960.
UJCML	<b>Union des jeunesses communistes marxistes-leninistes – Union of Marxist-Leninist Communist Youth</b> , Maoist organization founded in 1966 by students expelled from the UEC (including Benny Levy and Robert Linhart). Dissolved by the state in June 1968. A minority went on to found the Gauche proletarienne whilst the majority joined the Parti communiste marxiste-leniniste de France (PCMLF) or went on to found Vive la Revolution.
UMP	<b>Union pour un mouvement populaire – Union for a Popular Movement</b> , main centre-right party in France, founded in 2002 and merging several forces, especially the RPR and the UDF.
UNE	<b>Uniao Nacional dos Estudantes – Brazilian National Union of Students</b>
UNED	<b>Universidad Espanola de Educacion a Distancia – Spanish University of Distance Learning</b>
UNEF	<b>Union nationale des etudiants de France – main French students' union</b> , founded in 1907. During the 1970s, two main UNEFs coexisted: UNEF (Unite Syndicale) (UNEF-US), founded in 1971 and controlled by the Lambertists (with a Socialist tendency from 1978 onwards), and UNEF (Renouveau), controlled by the PCF with the participation of Mitterrand supporters and others. In 1980, UNEF-US fused with the Mouvement d'action syndicale (MAS), controlled by the LCR, to form UNEF Independante et democratique (Unef-ID). In 2001, UNEF-ID and UNEF-Solidaite Étudiante (the new name for UNEF-Renouveau since the early 1980s) merged to refound a unitary UNEF.
USFI	<b>United Secretariat of the Fourth International – see FI</b>



## Fourth Person Singular

A slow impatience. Something creeping on, you might say.

– George Steiner

I say ‘we’, and am unsure whom I am putting into this mixture.

– Erri de Luca

I hesitated for a long while before writing this book, which records a personal itinerary among the intellectual and political representatives of a generation. There is always something shameless in speaking about yourself, or perhaps an ulterior motive. And I hardly have the taste for testimony and confession. There is also the risk, in recording your memories, of pinching those of others and unjustly appropriating a shared experience.

In the days (the 1970s) when questioning the floating boundaries between public and private was considered the height of boldness, when ‘putting your cards on the table’ was seen as a liberating gesture, I preferred to keep my inner life below the waterline. That brought me some serious vexations. I also persevered in the conviction that transparency, unless it was transcendent (as an anonymous hand wrote on the plate-glass windows of Nanterre in May 68), could be deadly. And the more so, once electronic and televisual voyeurism became invasive. So long as individuals are exposed to the brutality of physical or verbal domination, the right of each person to their share of obscurity will remain indefeasible.

Any autobiographical revelation bears the mark of sin, and cannot avoid a bit of sharp practicality. To ‘portray oneself’ is almost an impossible mission. ‘No one can speak the truth about themselves’: without being initiated into the chiaroscuro of the unconscious, the subtle Heine was nobody’s fool. On his deathbed, however, he wrote his ‘confessions’. This final disclosure was undoubtedly a sign of despair and a cry for help. For Swann, too, so immersed in the arcana of convention and decency, it was only on suffering extreme distress that he committed the indelicacy, in the cruel scene of the red slippers, of trusting the Guermantes with the announcement of his impending death.

The old adventurer Raymond Molinier,<sup>i</sup> when I suggested writing his life story, saw this as an insult. Such tales were alright for those hanging up their gloves. But while there’s life, there’s action. No retirement in the cause of revolution! Jules Fourier, veteran of the Popular Front, the Spanish war and the Resistance, an escapee from Mauthausen, only gave in to a similar proposal as if committing a shameless act.<sup>ii</sup> These were men from before the age of the media, before the time of appearances that are as propitious as a tropical greenhouse for the luxuriant unfolding of the ego, the neurotic need for recognition, the narcissistic flattery of the image. Silvio Berlusconi, *cavaliere*, said one day that his most precious possession had been attacked – his image. The old Jewish *Bilderverbot*<sup>1</sup> was not without its prospective wisdom.

A particular trigger decided me to risk this unlikely project. The twenty-first of January is the anniversary both of the execution of Louis Capet and of the clinical death of Lenin. That day, in the

early 1960s, our history teacher in the *preparatoire* class of the Lycee Pierre-de-Fermat, an old monarchist aesthete, would sport a black tie as a token of mourning. We countered him in more uncertain terms with red scarfs and ties. By fortuitous coincidence, it was on 21 January 2001 that I (very belatedly) defended my *habilitation* to conduct research in philosophy. Having been long convinced of the imminence of great upheavals, I had always neglected that formality.

The requirements that this bout of academic skating imposes are laid down in ministerial circulars. The dossier must 'provide a synthesis of several dozen pages, presenting, firstly, the scientific career of the candidate, his or her methodology and the coherence of the different elements of the dossier, and secondly, the possible extent of his or her research'. In sum: my life (intellectual, quite omitting the body) and my work. This exercise flatters the retrospective illusion of a coherent trajectory based on reason.

How can one play this game without retrospectively introducing an artificial order into the disordered curiosities and passions, encounters and experiments in which chance plays a part? What unity can be ascribed to an itinerary full of false trails and turnings back? What connections can be established between this series of trials and errors without bringing in accidents of biography, since – in my case – the 'elements of the academic dossier' can scarcely be distinguished from my dossier as an activist, and the 'methodology' required by the ministerial authorities was often subordinate to political bifurcations and choices that had very little to do with methodology?

The session was friendly rather than solemn, my defence being the opportunity for a complicated comparison of intellectual trajectories that mixed mutual attraction and genuine divergence, not to mention misunderstandings and miscognitions.<sup>2</sup> I experienced the feeling that we belonged to a landscape threatened with disappearance. We had all grown up in the historical sequence opened by the Great War and the Russian Revolution, on a continent that was now almost submerged. Our formative years – the 1950s, 60s and 70s – were as remote, for the new minds of the new century as the Belle Époque, the Dreyfus affair, or the heroic deeds of Teruel and Guadalajara had been to us. Can the light from our extinct stars still travel on? Is there still time to rescue this tradition from the conformism that always threatens?

To transmit, but what? And how? It is the heirs who decide the inheritance. They make the selection, and are more faithful to it in infidelity than in the bigotry of memorial. For fidelity can itself become a banally conservative routine, preventing one from being astonished by the present. How not to distrust, anyway, that virtuous fidelity which betrayal accompanies like a shadow? Do we always know to what or whom one is really faithful?

Fidelity has a past. It is never sure of having a future. Many friends, tired no doubt of often having had to press against the grain of history, have made peace with the intolerable order of things. How melancholy was the disenchanted fidelity of Flaubert's 48ers in *A Sentimental Education*! 'Remain faithful to what you were' means being faithful to the fissure of the event and the moment of truth, where what is usually invisible suddenly reveals itself. It does not mean giving in to the command of the winners, surrendering to their victory, entering their ranks. As opposed to a dogged attachment to a faded past, it means being 'faithful to the rendezvous' whether one of love, politics or history.

Children see the world on their own scale. This ground-level vision for me was one of a tiled floor, cracks in the warped lino, miniature Tours de France whose racers were beer or lemonade bottle-tops. A pond for us was an ocean, a backyard a jungle, a thimble a world. We keep the childish relationship to history, making a vertiginous mountain, a crevice or a dizzying abyss out

the smallest wrinkle. In 'old Europe', exhausted, crippled and broken-down, our postwar generations saw more in the way of farces and comedies than of epics. We had only the tragi-comic echoes of tragedies experienced at a distance or vicariously. Our boulevard theatre showed the *buffone*, the *fanfarone* and the *pantalone*, rather than the heroism of the young people of the Affiche Rouge. Born amid a war that we were told about but had not fought, we had only imaginary stormings of the Winter Palace and battles of the Ebro. In the same way, Gilles Perrault had believed he was waging in Algeria the war of civilisation that he missed; he found himself in the ranks of a colonial army of occupation; and he never finished expiating this sinister misunderstanding.<sup>3</sup> Régis Debray, off in search of history in the making, returned with the sketches for his *Journal d'un petit bourgeois entre deux feux et quatre murs*, devastated at not having written by the age of thirty a line that would have been worth a verse of Rimbaud. Despite being in a hurry, we were forced to bend, against time that is always pressing, to the hard school of patience, and learn the slowness of impatience.

From their journeys to Abyssinia, many returned bruised by disappointment and bitterness. Others were lost. Michele Firk, unsurprised by the coming of her executioners.<sup>iii</sup> Pierre Goldman, unconsolated at not having known Marcel Rayman.<sup>iv</sup> Michel Recanati, frustrated by an age that failed to match his expectations.<sup>v</sup> And François Maspero, in both his life and his books, who never ceased to carry within him the shade of a brother who fell at the front in the struggle against Nazism.<sup>vi</sup>

Revolutionaries with no revolution? The suicidal pursuit of an outmoded ideal? Quixotic tragedies? When Che Guevara resumed his journey, his shield on his arm and feeling beneath his heels 'the ribs of Rocinante',<sup>4</sup> he was in no way suicidal, contrary to what a half-baked psychologist claims. Mentioning the possibility of his coming death, he wrote in his farewell letter to his parents: 'I don't seek it, but it's within the logical realm of probabilities.' This logic was the simple corollary of an 'illogical moment in the history of humanity'.

Our post-heroic generations were not keen to be miniature Chateaubriands or Malraux. No one chooses their historical moment. You have to be content with the challenges and opportunities that the era offers, and 'have the modesty to say that the time we live in is not *the unique* or fundamental or irruptive point in history where everything is completed and begun again.'<sup>5</sup> When great hopes have led in their wings, little ones spring up like mushrooms on the ground, in everyday resistance and minuscule conspiracies.

How can one tackle a history in which individual and collective are constantly intertwined? I and We? The first person singular misses the plurality of angles, of intersecting points of view and multiple perspectives. It falls into the trap of complacency and self-pity, prey to an illusion of the sovereign subject, in control of his or her life and reason.

As for the 'we', caught in the net of a generation, it imposes affinities that are not agreed, which the heart no longer shares. It is increasingly hard for me to recognise myself in that 'generation' of old hams who refuse to get off the stage. The derisory tag of '68-er' is ever more hateful when borne as the pennant of a certificate of imperial nobility. Herve Hamon and Patrick Rotman's book is exemplary of this generational hijacking and confiscation: a princely success story, light years away from the rigours of the *Annales* school.<sup>6 vii</sup> The 'generation' that they compose is prodigious in fraudulent confessions and miserly in sincere self-criticism. It is spoiled to the point of becoming senile. 'We invented the Third World,' Jean-Pierre Le Dantec boasts. 'We discovered the Third World,' Bernard Kouchner makes out.<sup>7</sup> There were those who used to claim to have 'discovered' America, as if it had been waiting for them, as if it had not existed without them: and as if these beautiful unknown lands could only be drawn from their historic slumber by the

resurrecting kiss of the West!

The ‘problem of generations’ has sometimes provided a clever pretext for replacing social classes with age classes. A reassuringly biased representation of antagonisms: ‘it’ll pass’, this ‘meaning revolt, insubordination, recalcitrance – since youth does indeed have to ‘pass’. A happy ending. Everything ends up returning to order and rank. A question of biology. The blase wisdom of sober old men.

Thus everything passes, everything goes

And we ourselves pass away ...

To give an account of a collective experience, however, it is hard to avoid the use of ‘we’. Making clear right away, of course, that this is not a ‘royal we’ (something that is at best a politeness, and at worst an abuse of power), but an instrumental one. Unstable and uncertain, it sometimes denotes a definite group (the Ligue Communiste), sometimes an invisible community whose links of affinity run below the deceptive surface of visible communities; or again a tacit conspiracy, without formal membership, limits or borders, of the irredeemably stiff-necked.

‘We’, said Lucien Goldmann, is not the plural of ‘I’, but something different. The solution would be to write ‘in the fourth person’, as Gilles Deleuze proposed, citing Ferlinghetti: ‘The voice of the fourth person singular, in which no one speaks and yet which does exist.’ This imaginative usage of ‘one’ would escape the dubious majesty of ‘we’ as well as the suspect pride of ‘I’,<sup>8</sup> at grips with its superegos.

One lives, one loves, one dies ...

One isn’t serious at seventeen ...

– Rimbaud

The depth of this ‘one’, to cite Deleuze once more, is ‘that of the event itself, or of the fourth person’. Because to attain one’s own singularity, you have to know how to efface the share of subjectivity in the event. ‘One’ then goes beyond the subjective story, the anecdotal character of ‘too close’. It becomes ‘the mark of transition, of entry into movement’, of the uprooting of being in the flux of becoming.

I shall seek, accordingly, to hold myself to an interstitial speech, an unstable equilibrium between an ‘I’, a ‘we’, and this ungraspable ‘one’. In this uncomfortable interval where the ‘fourth person singular’ dwells, the ‘I’ cannot be totally eclipsed. The important thing, though, as Heidegger said, is ‘always to clearly indicate one’s colour’, instead of pretending to the objectivity and impartiality of self-evidence. I shall proclaim this, accordingly, once and for all. The colour is red since ‘the very air is red, as if screaming’.<sup>9</sup> And ‘partisan writing’ is not an act of sectarianism, but a token of basic honesty towards the reader.

Over the years, the conspiracy of egos has totally got the upper hand over the conspiracy of equals – what Guy Hocquenghem called ‘renegacy’.<sup>viii</sup> I don’t much care for the rhetoric of betrayal. Basically, turncoats are faithful to themselves, and parvenus to what they’ve become.

The dividing line passes rather between the ‘one-timers’ and the ‘exes’: a demarcation of cynicism and resentment. ‘One-timers’ keep a certain emotional loyalty. The word conjures up without regret common experiences, a kind of informal club. ‘One-timers’ regret nothing. They have neither reneged nor repented. When the heart is no longer there, they continue differently, in other ways, in other forms.

The 'exes', on the contrary, make a clear break. They play a role that they no longer believe in. They even 'deny their denial', and 'to the disgrace of apostasy add the cowardice of lying'.<sup>10</sup> This is a recurring phenomenon in history: 'former apostles who dreamed of a golden age for all humanity have been happy to propagate the age of money; several of them have become millionaires, and more than one has reached a most honorific and lucrative position – travel by railway is quick'. And, as for the supersonic plane ...

Sometimes, 'one-timers' become 'exes', joining this world of dead souls, a world of phantom and spectres who live only in the past. Happily, even if the Famas (almost) always end up winning, the Cronopios do not all end up as Famas.<sup>ix</sup> The latter have the taste for victory. But if only they made history, then 'there wouldn't be any more History'.<sup>12</sup> We would fall back into the claws of Destiny or Providence of sinister memory, which it took so much effort to escape.

The danger in dwelling too much on one's past is that of falling back into it, in the quest for excuses and justifications. The 'approximative' journalists insultingly attributed to me the maxim that we were supposedly 'right to be wrong'.<sup>13</sup> Their intention, no doubt, was to present me as doctrinaire armed with certitudes, inaccessible to doubt, stubbornly opposing his fantasies to reality. I don't remember ever having expressed myself in this way. On reflection, however, it seems neither shocking nor unlikely.

It is indeed possible to be 'right to be wrong'. This happens even rather often. It is a matter of context and circumstances. Wrong against whom, in relation to whom, about what? In politics as in history, there is no 'run of the arrow'. Today's temporary success or capricious victory proves nothing. The last word is never spoken. Despite immediate appearances, Luther was wrong and Thomas Munzer right. Genuine modesty, according to Andre Soares, consists in 'knowing not always to see oneself as right, and in being deliberately wrong'.<sup>14</sup> The wrong is often the right of the defeated.

The pragmatic criterion of 'what works' for the moment may be good for Tony Blair (or Deng Xiaoping).<sup>15</sup> But efficacy is always relative to the time factor. Regis Debray, claiming practical realism against the impotence of principles, told me one day that he had served Mitterrand for the sake of efficacy. Ten years later, this supposed efficacy was no longer so obvious. Effective in what way, and for whom? I imagine that Sami Naïr likewise justified his service to Jean-Pierre Chevènement from a concern for efficacy.<sup>x</sup> In the same way as Luc Ferry or Blandine Kriegel no doubt invoke their desire to be useful to give a noble gloss to their pathetic rallying to Jean-Pierre Raffarin and Nicolas Sarkozy.<sup>xi</sup> This servitude is all the more despicable from being voluntary and agreed. Are they so convinced of being useful, and to what end?

The question is one of scale and perspective. Joan of Arc, Saint-Just, Blanqui and many others were condemned by the tribunal of God or History. Their judges deemed them wrong. But in profane history there is no last judgement. The verdict is always open to appeal. Seeing how the world is going, we were indeed right to be wrong against Stalin and his show trials, against the terrifying Congresses of Victors, against the beatitudes of neoliberal globalisation celebrated by Alain Minc.<sup>xii</sup> And right to believe, against the grain, that the world can still change and that we can contribute to this.

We have sometimes deceived ourselves, perhaps even often, and on many things. But at least we did not deceive ourselves about either the struggle or the choice of enemy.

Thirty years after independence, Algeria was in the grips of civil war. The war of liberation in Indochina took a bad turn, with the butchery in Cambodia and the conflicts between peoples who had proclaimed themselves brothers. The humanist socialism that Che dreamed of seems to have

evaporated. And yet? Is this sufficient reason to go over to the winning side, arms and baggage and enrol in the imperial crusades of George Bush and Donald Rumsfeld?

The ‘dispersal of meaning’ in no way justifies such rejections and rallyings. Even before the fall of the Berlin Wall and the implosion of the Soviet Union, Jean-Christophe Bailly wrote about the 1960s:

Revolution changed its home base, its continent, according to political colour, but it came from outside, and had the irrational virtue of an emotion tied to something distant that had to be brought into being. An emotional movement, no doubt, even if it was armed with theories, and lent more to the actual combatants than they could return. Today the tone is one of mockery, even pride. People conceal the fact that they waved flags and shouted names, or else they laugh themselves sick. There was undoubtedly an immense amount of illusion – but if there had not been, there would not have been that movement, that leap, the active convergence of all those rejections, and would we not then have covered ourselves with shame, quite incomparable with the mistakes that we may have committed in the running fire of support actions?<sup>16</sup>

This is my position too. The planet-wide demonstrations of 15 February 2003 against the imperialist war were a new struggle against the shame there would have been in doing nothing. Without seeking here any positive hero, which is certainly for the best: neither Bin Laden nor Saddam Hussein were champions of a new internationalism.

Duty performed, or useless service? As long as one claims the right to start again, the last word is never said. And one always recommences from the middle, as Gilles Deleuze maintained. Neither a clean slate nor a white page: ‘It is the future of the past, as it were, that is in question.’<sup>17</sup>

This book is not a novel. But it is a story of apprenticeship – an apprenticeship in patience and slowness – however incomplete. It has no other ambition than to retrace an activist and intellectual trajectory, after the disaster of Stalinism, in the age of the commodity apotheosis, when the hieroglyphs of modernity reveal their secrets to the light of day. It is neither an autobiography nor a memoir. Like the tender and stubborn memoirs of Cadichon,<sup>xiii</sup> the only worthwhile memoirs are indeed those of an ass. It is rather a simple testimony, designed to help in understanding what we did and what we desired.

Travel diaries or notebooks, whose digressions, refrains, fragments, quotations, controversies and remembrances make up a political *Carte du Tendre*, or an imaginary landscape like those drawn for children, where a benevolent ogre is hidden in the foliage.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Raymond Molinier (Marco), 1904–94, joined the Jeunesse Communistes in 1922. He was with Trotsky in Turkey from early April 1929, and organised Trotsky’s mid-1930s’ stay in France. From 1935 he was an entryist member of the SFIO. At the beginning of WWII he joined up with a circus in Lisbon, which provided a channel through which he was able to save numerous revolutionary militants. He headed for Argentina after 1945. An activist in the PRT-ERP, he quit the country after the 1976 coup, returning to France in 1977. There he was active in the LCR.

<sup>ii</sup> Jules Fourier, 1907–99, decorator. In the PCF from 1929, and elected an MP for that party in 1936. He broke with the PCF at the moment of the Nazi–Soviet pact. A Resistance militant, he was deported to a concentration camp. After the war he was active in the PSU and subsequently the LCR. He published his memoirs *Graine Rouge* in 1983.

<sup>iii</sup> Michele Firk, born 1937, member of the PCF, involved in getting support to the Algerian FLN. Committed suicide in 1968 as she was about to be arrested by the Guatemalan police during the guerrilla struggle.

<sup>iv</sup> Pierre Goldman, 1944–79, born in Lyon to Polish–Jewish Resistance members. His anti-fascism led him to the UEC, in which he was a member of the *service d’ordre*. In 1966 he headed for Cuba, with the objective of joining up with a guerrilla movement.

Latin America. Returning to Paris without firing a shot, he frequented West Indian circles in the capital. Arrested on 8 April 1974, he was accused of four robberies, in one of which a pharmacist and her assistant had been killed. Sentenced, in 1974, to 10 years imprisonment at his first trial, he wrote his autobiography, *Souvenirs obscurs d'un Juif polonais né en France*, which Seuil published in 1975. Acquitted at his second trial of the double murder, he was soon released. But he had just three years left to live as he was assassinated on 20 September 1979 by a mysterious group called Honneur de la Police. Ten thousand people attended his funeral at the Pere-Lachaise, including most of the main personalities of the far left.

Marcel Rayman/Rajman, 1923–44, a Polish migrant worker, was head of the 11th arrondissement Jeunesse Communiste during the German Occupation. Active in the 2nd Jewish detachment of the FTP, he schooled the Czech and Armenian groups of the MGC in military technique, both in theory and practice. Also a member of the train-derailing unit. Arrested, tortured and shot together with the Manouchian/Affiche Rouge group.

v Michel Recanati (Ludo), 1950–78, a baccalaureat student in 1968, who later studied at the Paris Faculty of Letters and School of Oriental Languages. His parents were publishers/publicists. A member of the JCR from 1966. Member of the national bureau of the CAL in May 68. On the central committee then the politburo of the LC, responsible for high school students. One of the leaders of the LC's *service d'ordre* at the time of its June 1973 banning. Under warrant for arrest from July 1973, he was locked up in La Sante on 17 September. Released under caution in November 1973, awaiting a trial, he was stripped of his ID. Ultimately the case against him and Krivine was dismissed in October 1974. At the beginning of 1975 he resigned from the central committee and then gradually drifted away from the LCR. Killed himself in 1978. His friend Romain Goupil dedicated a film to him, *Mourir à 30 ans* ['To die aged 30'].

Romain Goupil (Charpentier), born 1951, LC/LCR member, one of the leaders of the stewarding service ('service d'ordre'). After his departure from the LCR, moved further and further towards neoconservative positions. Supported the Iraq wars. Filmmaker and writer.

vi François Maspero, born 1932, director/founder of the La Joie de Lire bookshop (1957–74) in the Latin Quarter, a meeting place for all anti-colonialist and revolutionary activists. Well-known editor, publisher and journal director of publications such as *Partisans* (1961–72). Member of the PCF in 1955–56, then a 'porteur de valises' (bag carrier for the Algerian resistance). Member of the LC from 1969 to 1973, today a translator and writer.

vii Herve Hamon, born 1946, journalist and author, together with Patrick Rotman, of *Les Porteurs de Valises* (on French opposition to the Algerian War) in 1979, and the two volume *Generation*, namely the 1987 *Les Années de Reve* (covering 1956–68) and *Les Années de Poudre* (post May 68) in 1988.

Patrick Rotman, born 1949, journalist and TV producer, produced important works on Algeria and on the 1968 generation together with Herve Hamon.

viii Guy Hocquenghem, 1946–1988, died of AIDS aged 42. A member of the JCR during his studies at the Rue d'Ulm École Normale Supérieure. Upon the creation of the Ligue Communiste in 1969, he was expelled for 'spontaneism'. In 1971 he was one of the founders of the FHAR (Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action).

ix A reference to Julio Cortazar's *Historias de cronopios y de famas*.

x Sami Naïr, born 1947, a member of the JCR then the LC in the early 1970s. A speaker of four languages (French, English, Spanish and Arabic), he has taught at Paris VIII and Valencia. Having grown close to Jean-Pierre Chevenement, he was for some years a member of the latter's MDC party. Member of the Conseil d'Etat, professor at the Sciences-Po.

Jean-Pierre Chevenement, born 1939, studied at the Ecole Nationale de l'Administration, and occupied several ministerial positions in the 1980s and 1990s. A presidential candidate in 2002, he scored less than 5 per cent. Mayor and then senator representing Belfort. A member of the SFIO from 1964, he took part in the foundation of the Parti Socialiste at its 1971 Epinal Congress. Leader of the CERES tendency and then Socialisme et République. Author of the party's 1981 programme. An opponent of the First Gulf War, the Maastricht Treaty and the European Constitution. He created the MDC then the MRC, a Eurosceptic and national-republican party of the centre-left.

xi Luc Ferry, born 1951, right-wing liberal philosopher. Minister of education under the UMP prime minister Jean-Pierre

Raffarin 2002–04, he proposed the bill banning the open display of religious symbols and clothing in schools. Author, with Alain Renault, of the anti-radical book *La pensée 68 en France*.

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Blandine Kriegel, born 1943, from 1967 a member of the Maoist UJCML. Student of Michel Foucault at the Collège de France. Broke with Marxism in 1979, becoming a supporter and adviser of Jacques Chirac from the 1990s. Political philosopher, president of the state council for integration from 2002–08, and opponent of positive discrimination.

<sup>xii</sup> Alain Minc, born 1945, businessman, editorialist and politico-economic consultant. A graduate of the ENA and Paris Sciences Po. Has been on the board of various major businesses such as high street retailer FNAC, Yves Saint Laurent and *Le Monde*. Adviser to Nicolas Sarkozy. Became the symbol of the French version of globalisation boosterism with his book *Mondialisation heureuse* (1997).

<sup>xiii</sup> The performing donkey of *Cadichon's Life Story*, adapted from the Comtesse de Segur's *Les Mémoires d'un âne*.



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