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Jakob Moneta - A life lived

Tuesday 6 March 2012, by [DAHMER Helmut](#) (Date first published: 4 March 2012).

On 3 March 2012, at the age of 97, Jakob Moneta died at the Frankfurt Jewish Old Age Home. Like Isaac Deutscher and Günter Anders, Moneta was a “non-Jewish Jew”, a distinguished polyglot journalist and trade unionist and one of the few dedicated proponents of internationalism and Soviet Democracy. He was born on 11 November 1914, in the small town of Blasowa (then in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, currently in Poland), and was the son of a textile manufacturer. After the First World War his family left Poland’s anti-Semitic persecution to settle in Cologne (Germany).

At the age of seventeen, Jakob joined the youth organisation of the “Socialist Workers’ Party” (SAP). The eminent Marxist literary scholar Hans Mayer (*Georg Büchner and His Times*, 1946) acquainted Moneta with Trotsky’s writings and the Communist “Left Opposition” in the years prior to 1933. After the victory of Hitler’s movement, Moneta’s family emigrated first to Cuba, then to the USA, while Jakob moved to Palestine and spent six years in a Kibbutz.

The Arab uprising in 1936-39 led to his break with (left) Zionism. He was first active in the Histadrut trade union confederation and later was among the founders of the only non-confessional Jewish-Arab trade union. The British interned him at the outbreak of war, for more than two years, in Acre. In 1948, he returned to Cologne, joined the small Trotskyist group, made up of returning emigrants, young workers and socialist students, and later moved to Frankfurt. As a journalist, he worked for the *Rheinische Zeitung*, close to the SPD.

From 1953 to 1962, he was a social attaché for the West German Embassy in Paris and in secret, actively supported the Algerian liberation movement (FLN). From 1962 to 1978, he was the editor of the monthly trade-union publication *Metall-Zeitung*; which under his aegis reached a circulation of 2.2 million. He was a leading member of the “International Marxist Group” (GIM), [German Section of the FI] and later, of the “United Socialist Party” (VSP) [fusion of GIM and ex-Maoist KPD]. Finally (after his expulsion from the SPD in 1990) he became an member of the PDS and he was engaged in all the Left’s anti-imperialist campaigns; he took part in the Easter peace marches and the anti-nuclear movement, organized strikes as well as translating social science and historical books.

Often under pseudonyms, he wrote countless articles for the socialist press. His most significant publications were a comprehensive critical account of the colonial policy of the French Communist Party (1968) and a concise presentation of the *Rise and fall of Stalinism* (1952, reedited in 1971). As a motto for his life, he most likely would have chosen Cicero’s “dum spiro spero” (“as long as I breathe, I hope”), which the young Trotsky had already made his own at the turn of the 20th Century.

Helmut Dahmer, Vienna, 4. 3. 2012

P.S.

* Translated from the German.