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Claude Jacquin, also known as Gabriel (1947-2016): homages & memories

Monday 9 May 2016, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 1 May 2016).

Many messages received after the death of our friend Claude are in French. We reproduce below those received in English or, for few of them, translated.



Claude in 1990, at a Fourth International Youth Camp in Belgium.

AFRICA

Zimbabwe

My first contact with Claude was in 1975 shortly after I had been recruited into what I later discovered to be affiliated to the FI, the group 'Africa in Struggle' (AIS). We were a small collection of Africans in the diaspora, most being in exile from their countries and engaging clandestinely in left politics. We new recruits were initially introduced to Claude, who was evidently the architect of AIS, through his regular writings in the publication. It was clear from his always consistent, and often very critical, comments on our draft articles - in my case on Zimbabwe and Southern Africa - that his political acumen was very well-developed and his analysis very sharp, and his commitment to Africa profound. I eventually met Claude in London at an AIS meeting where he led wide-ranging discussions on the political opportunities and challenges in many African countries. He was impressive and somewhat intimidating !

I spent time with Claude some years later after I had returned to Zimbabwe. He was paying a visit to Southern Africa to assist comrades engaged in political struggles to refine their analyses and strategies. At this he was expert. Claude was staying with Carl Brecker and Kate Truscott, who were

at the centre of our small left grouping that included several South Africans in exile in Zimbabwe. Claude accompanied me on a visit into Zimbabwe's rural areas where I was working. My main intention was to show him that, unlike in South Africa, the peasantry was still a significant social group. Sadly, on that very day Claude had news of his father's sudden and unexpected death. While travelling with him, Claude's otherwise well-concealed softness revealed itself. We assisted him to leave Zimbabwe earlier than he had planned.

My last few encounters with Claude have been in South Africa through Brian and Mercia. It was clear that Claude was already very ill, but that his analytic mind was as strong as ever. During those few encounters it was a pleasure to meet Sylvie.

Claude played an important role in my political development - as he has done with countless others. The best tribute to him will be for us to continue his work.

Hamba Kahle Claude !

David Sanders,

Cape Town,
April 24 2016

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Mauritius

In the name of LALIT, I would like to express our shared sadness at the news of the death of Cde. Gabriel. When he looked after links with groups and parties in Africa, those of us who came to know him as a comrade learnt a great deal from him.

Please convey our condolence to all the comrades, friends and family that he leaves behind.

Yours,

Lindsey Collen

For LALIT, Ile Maurice

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Thank you for forwarding me these sad news. He was also a good friend and a dedicated comrade who helped us here.

Lolo (Jean-Claude Bibi, Mauritius)

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Without Gabriel I would never have experienced the interest I felt for the African continent

Without Gabriel I would never have experienced the interest I felt, at many levels, for the African continent. Nothing predisposed me to this choice, and it is my involvement, under his leadership, that presided over the most important directions I chose in the course of my life - at political, professional and personal levels. I do not know whether he was ever aware of this, as a certain distance, aloofness, was his guideline in his relationships to others. His conception of his own commitment was such an overarching idea that it could not accommodate the commitment I lived in the context of a journalistic career. An approach that tends to be quite uncommon, in those days of

confusion.

Gabriel conveyed to those who worked with him an intellectual thoroughness that as far as I am concerned, helped me immensely when it came to analysing the information of countries such as Algeria and most of all South Africa. I was never in contact with him in that particular country and I was sad I did not. Did he think it was impossible to make sense, to the media, of the immensity of the task awaiting the revolutionaries when it came to building an alternative to the left of the ANC? Probably not, but, unfortunately, I will never know.

As the thorough observer of South African politics whom I became overtime, I can say that never, in the short democratic life of this country and in the context of the major crisis which the ANC is currently experiencing, has the lack of a real left and revolutionary alternative that would structure itself around the main social currents of the country, ever been so acute. Just as the ANC was clever enough to understand this when, during the 80's, it placed the building up of trade union confederation COSATU at the centre of the antiapartheid struggle.

Today, the issue is as urgent as it was yesterday, and this shows us that Gabriel was at the forefront, as a revolutionary, and that he did not fight for nothing.

Anne Dissez

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Stimela Coal Song

There is a train that comes from Namibia and Malawi
there is a train that comes from Zambia and Zimbabwe,
There is a train that comes from Angola and Mozambique,
From Lesotho, from Botswana, from Zwaziland,
From all the hinterland of Southern and Central Africa.
This train carries young and old, African men
Who are conscripted to come and work on contract
In the golden mineral mines of Johannesburg
And its surrounding metropolis, sixteen hours or more a day
For almost no pay.
Deep, deep, deep down in the belly of the earth
When they are digging and drilling that shiny mighty evasive stone,
Or when they dish that mish mesh mush food
into their iron plates with the iron shank.
Or when they sit in their stinking, funky, filthy,
Flea-ridden barracks and hostels.
They think about the loved ones they may never see again Because they might have already been
forcibly removed
From where they last left them
Or wantonly murdered in the dead of night
By roving, marauding gangs of no particular origin,
We are told. they think about their lands, their herds
That were taken away from them
With a gun, bomb, teargas and the cannon.
And when they hear that Choo-Choo train
They always curse, curse the coal train,
The coal train that brought them to Johannesburg.

From Mercia and Brian

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y09bhF_KcKI

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So sorry to hear about Gabriel's death. Since I was part of the leadership at the same time, I knew him, of course, but didn't really know what he had been doing for the last 20 years. I hope the last years of his life were productive and - dare I say ? - happy. He certainly took on a difficult, ambitious job with the Africa links. All the best to his close comrades, friends, and family.

Heather

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YOUTH CAMP

Something exceptionally important

Dear friends and comrades,

The announcement of Claude's death moved me greatly. As I am no longer in the old circuits, I did not know he was sick. Many thanks to my dear friend Penny for telling me, although the news was extremely distressing. I will never forget the moment when 'Gabriel' took charge of the 'youth work', the organization of international summer camps, meetings of the European youth secretariat in Paris, the youth schools in Amsterdam and - at least in my mind - that unforgettable 1992 school where 'young leaders at the end of their careers' from around the world were brought together for a month before they were going to start a new life as cadres of their [adult] organizations.

Gabriel had succeeded in doing something exceptionally important with us, these young people. Beyond our different cultures and traditions organization, he had forged a real team comrades, friend (s), which - without denying national and regional specificities - were able to overcome differences to really understand and to really work together. During these years, we all benefited from his knowledge, his capacity for synthesis and we won in political maturity thanks to the confidence he had in us. 'Gabriel' became for us much more than a leading member of the International, he was a friend with whom we could share our doubts, but above all our jokes. The times when we were doubled over in laughter with the amusing anecdotes he told, or with sketches that had been prepared - including an imitation of 'Gabriel' - are innumerable.

Today we are no longer so young and Claude is no longer with us. As a comrade and good friend rightly said to me this morning, "You only live once, and your friends will die only once. Jump on the TGV and come to Paris on Wednesday morning." Alas, this was not possible, so I send you this mail via Penny ... Just to tell you that tomorrow, in my thoughts, I'll be with you, Claude, with gratitude, with friendship, with solidarity with those close to him, and because his fight is ours and because wherever we are, we must pursue it.

Vincent Scheltiens

Antwerp

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Claude Gabriel has just died ... I will only speak of him by an anecdote (apart from his French-accented English and his famous "Socialism is happiness") ... He was responsible for relations with

the youth and the youth camps of our International (the Fourth). In 1990 we made posters for the lgbt day at the youth camp, with portraits of great revolutionary leaders, "queerised" as we say today. The next day, scandal !!!! The Polish delegation asked for an item at the camp leadership to complain about the work of the LGBT commission. Claude was very serious, the International leadership was listening to the Poles. And answered very learnedly that nothing in the revolutionary writings and in the knowledge we have of the great revolutionaries showed that they were completely heterosexual

Jean-Louis Touton

AMSTERDAM SCHOOL

I just saw the news. I'm devastated. He was brilliant and friendly, loving real discussions, not just agreements, and always really well prepared for the talks he gave at the IIRE. I learned a lot from him and remember his excitement at explaining how corporations were now structured under globalisation. A big loss.

Susan Caldwell

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I kept inviting Claude to the IIRE sessions while I was myself on staff there and after I continued reading his pieces on ESSF. I had no idea he was sick, so his death is a big shock.

Peter

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A JUST AND GREAT TRIBUTE

Dear Pierre,

It is always a huge loss if someone dies too young like Claude Gabriel, especially for the family and the friends. In a way also for the movement, but that's of course very different.

I have seen Claude once. In february 1992 we had a congress of the Dutch section in Amsterdam and because there was a international meeting of the Fourth International in the IRRE at the same time it was possible that Claude came to give the greetings on behalf of the International.

I remember that Robert was very postive about Claude, both as a human being and for his political qualities.

You have given your friend a just and great tribute at Europe-Solidaire.

Greetings,

John

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