

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Europe, Great Britain > France > The Left (France) > History of the Left (France) > Gérard Chaouat > **Gérard Chaouat, an exceptional militant life (6 May 1944 Algiers - 23 (...)**

Obituary

# **Gérard Chaouat, an exceptional militant life (6 May 1944 Algiers - 23 Avril 2021 Paris)**

Tuesday 25 May 2021, by [DUGGAN Penelope](#), [Ensemble !](#) (Date first published: 24 May 2021).

**Many tributes were paid to the Fourth Internationalist and and eminent medical researcher Gérard Chaouat. Here we publish two in translation. Others can be found (in French) on the ESSF site in a [dedicated rubric](#).**

Our friend and comrade Gérard Chaouat has just left us. He was a friend that many of us knew. But he was also an exceptional activist.

Born in 1944, he made the struggle against the extreme right-wing pro-French Algeria in the Latin Quarter his first fight within the University Anti-Fascist Front (FUA). He was thus part of the militant generation which, steeped in the stories of the horrors of the Second World War, rejected the behaviour of the French army in Algeria. These activists were at the origin of the radicalization that led to May 1968. A radicalization which, for Gérard and his comrades, went from Algeria to Vietnam, the emblematic struggle of those years. Having turned to medical studies, he actively supported the fight for the right to abortion by performing illegal abortions before the vote on the Veil law.

Gérard joined the JCR, the League and the Fourth International. He was also a trade union activist in the Scientific Researchers' Union of the FEN, then of the FSU (he was until recently a member of its stewarding service). He never hesitated to undertake a militant task, as his comrades in the 20<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris know.

Of Jewish origin, he made it a point of honour to be determined in his support for the struggle of the Palestinian people. In this capacity, he was the head of the Palestine commission of Ensemble and had visited Palestine with a delegation from our movement.

A researcher in immunology, director of research emeritus at the CNRS, passionate about his work (he was still going to the lab to the end), he always made the link between his scientific concerns and the political aspects of research and medicine, so essential in these times.

ENSEMBLE! pays tribute to his militant career, a career made up of loyalty to our ideals, whatever the ups and downs of militancy in the years following 1968. His story is ours, his departure is our sadness.

**National Steering Committee of Ensemble!**

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## **An Internationalist all his life**

Gérard's internationalist commitment marks his whole life and this comes from his family history, born in Algeria to a Jewish family.

Like many of his generation and culture, his first commitment was to the question of Algeria, and in particular the Charonne demonstration in 1962 at the age of 17.

It was in 1966 that he joined the JCR and thus entered the circles of the Fourth International. He wrote many articles for his newspaper L'Avant-Garde Jeunesse. In November-December 1967 he wrote an article on the insufficiency of Soviet aid to Vietnamese fighters. In a scientific way - we can recognize Gérard - he details the armaments offered but also of course the political reason for this insufficiency - no question for the leaders of the USSR of risking calling into question the peaceful coexistence with the United States.

He attended the founding congress of the Ligue Communiste, the French section of the Fourth International, in 1969 and was a committed activist on many fronts related to his profession and his internationalist commitment - including in the British section when he was there in 1974-75.

It was a thoughtful and critical engagement. In 1980 Gerard disagreed with the position taken on the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, although this position was reversed the following year. He also had critical positions on the questions of Cambodia, Cuba, Iran... So for a few years Gérard was no longer formally a militant of the Fourth International - he became one again with great satisfaction in a new period.

On his internationalist commitments my comrade Christian Varin recalls "I was systematically with him in international solidarity, in rallies and meetings in solidarity with the peoples of Africa and the Middle East - including, of course, the Palestinian people, and again quite recently in the unitary collective and rallies to defend the repressed Catalan activists. Always discreet but so visible, smiling and determined!"

In May we commemorate the Paris Commune with the traditional march to the Mur des Fédérés. Then we do our own commemoration for our comrades of the International, Pierre Frank, Ernest Mandel, Daniel Bensaïd. Gérard was always part of the small group that put flowers on their graves. From now on we will also place a red carnation in the garden of memories for Gérard, on behalf of all his comrades of the Fourth International.

**Penelope Duggan**, for the Fourth International

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