

Adrien Vodslon, My Father: Mirek Vodslon

My father was an upright man. He always tried, when we were together at least, to think positively. He always said of life's minor evils: "It's still better than falling down stairs".

This family saying came from his uncle Paul who survived the concentration camps in World War II.

My father was also at home wherever he went, in Paris, Prague, Namibia or Marseille. He spoke around ten languages. Sadly, I was not able to test how well he spoke all of them. He loved learning languages.

Since he spoke all these languages, he was also open to discussion, to a huge number of discussions. I was often amazed by all the things that he knew. He would talk about energy production with hydrogen or genome research. Copies of the *American Scientist* lay around our flat for years.

One thing I will really miss is his typically Czech sense of humour, coming from a land which has known so many invasions. He could aim it at himself as much as at others. We had many laughs. Last Monday I passed my driving theory test. He wished: "the best of luck to you ... and all concerned".

Before he died he was reading Broué's history of the German revolution. There were books on mathematics more or less everywhere. He enjoyed them and found them relaxing.

However, his life was dedicated to politics, or rather, he dedicated his life to the working class and the improvement of its living conditions. He lived on nothing, and tried to defend the working class against wind and tide, as we say in French.

My father was an upright man. He tended to have problems with organisations, but I have rarely met such a clear-sighted dialectical fighter. Dialectics was his guideline. In politics he was often one or two steps ahead of everybody else. He always wanted to talk about politics. He expected others to put forward their opinions for discussion, fraternally, fervently and with arguments. The destiny of the working class was the topic of his life. There was no avoiding it ("c'était plus fort que lui").

He saw it as a great waste that so many young people entered the Sozialistische Alternative (SAV), full of the will to fight, but that they were not educated to think for themselves. It seemed to him that the classic works of Marxist became just books without discussion and criticism. But Marxism is living thought, not a statue.

For him it was clear: How could the movement of the working class be built without many heads able to think for themselves?

In the last period he was not very optimistic. There are too many wars and preparations for war going on for that. It is well known that the bourgeoisie has a solution for the current crisis of capitalism: war. So the question of "socialism or barbarism" is still open.

It was also obvious to him that we have no choice: we can fight or ... fight. Against the bourgeoisie and for the unity of the working class, on a national and international scale.

I sometimes found his insistence on knowing everything exactly a little long-winded. But justice, knowledge and workers' democracy all belonged together. He always spoke about the best traditions of the working class, and for him that meant workers' democracy, the will to fight and working-class culture.

He saw no point in standing at a factory gate without

political theory and political education.

He used to quote to me the *Bild-Zeitung* slogan (the most popular German tabloid): "Bild dir deine Meinung" ("Form you own opinion!"). And that's why I often contradicted him, and we disagreed. He was often right. I learned so much in those discussion. I will miss them.

He often quoted Trotsky that what matters is "not to laugh, not to cry, but to understand". And to act. He showed us how to act, and I would be glad if people would remember him as an uncompromising fighter for workers' rights, for the revolution.

My father suffered a lot of defeats. Until 13 December, he always stood his ground. My father, this fair-minded and upright person, should live on in us, with his way of thinking and when we are fighting.