



Extract of www.acdn.net

<https://www.acdn.net/spip/spip.php?article789>

Stéphane Hessel, a man of great heart, has just passed away.

- Homepage - News - News Articles -

Publication date: Thursday 28 February 2013

Copyright © www.acdn.net - All rights reserved



He was 95 and had had a cardiac crisis last year. But his mind had remained so youthful that he almost seemed immortal. We hoped he was, for his sake and for ours.

His long life has been so rich in thought and action that it cannot be summarized. Each person who has known him will have a testimony to bring. Mine is small, but enough to make me very emotional today. Above all Stéphane Hessel was extraordinarily simple, easy to approach, very generous and at the same time very lucid. He was an impenitent optimist, a humanist such as they don't make any more. He exuded goodness.

I met him first in Saintes where he had come to speak at the Book Festival for Human Rights and Solidarity. I showed him petitions for the abolition of nuclear weapons and for holding a referendum on that subject - obviously he signed. We stayed in touch and every time I sought something of him he delivered. He did not have the Internet, you had to write to him. But unless he was away from home, the day after I sent him a letter I was almost certain to get a phone call: « Bonjour, c'est Stéphane Hessel. Comment allez-vous ? »

Last year it was quite natural for him, even in failing health, to support the hunger-strike which Luc Dazy and I did to call for the referendum which will perhaps give the French people the chance to abolish the threat of nuclear arms. He himself denounced this threat, along with his friend Albert Jacquard, another great humanist, in their hard-hitting work « Exigez ! Un désarmement nucléaire total » [Demand it: total nuclear disarmament!] published in 2012. To support our action, he wrote to the President - as did Albert Jacquard - and he would gladly have joined our delegation if his health had not prevented it. With him present, perhaps Luc and I would have been received in the Elysee Palace and not arrested by the police 50 metres away.

Stéphane subsequently followed up on this, signing alongside Noam Chomsky and Mairead Maguire, the « Open Letter to the President of the Republic for a referendum on France's participation in the abolition of nuclear weapons », which became the "Appeal of the 113".

By a striking coincidence, it was yesterday, 26 February 2013, that ACDN made public this Open Letter in a media release on its website. It was yesterday that I posted the letter with the list of signatories to President Hollande in the Elysee Palace - only a few hours before Stéphane's death, which his wife Christiane says occurred during last night... It's as if this was Stéphane's final message, his testimony, his last gesture, the act that allowed him to shed the weight of the world.

So the 113 are down to 112. May they now swell to thousands, so that Stéphane's call is finally heeded by François

Stéphane Hessel, a man of great heart, has just passed away.

Hollande. Yes, Stéphane, we will miss you, but be assured that we will carry your flame. Until victory, until peace for all humankind.

Saintes, 27 February 2013

Jean-Marie Matagne
