

**“FOR WE WENT, CHANGING OUR COUNTRY MORE OFTEN THAN OUR  
SHOES” BRECHT  
A COMINTERN MILITANT’S LIFE IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

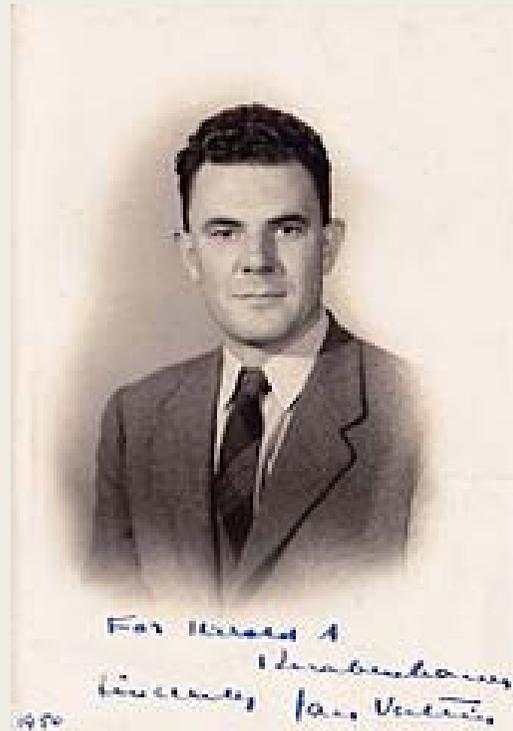
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# Richard Julius Hermann Krebs

*Jan Valtin*



(December 17, 1905  
- January 1, 1951)

# *Communism as a collective experience*



Raphael Samuel (*The Lost World of British Communism*, 2006) : ‘To be a Communist was to have a complete social identity, one which transcended the limits of class, gender, nationality’.

Paul Nizan (*La Conspiration*, 1938), ‘Communism is a politics, but it’s also a style of life’.

Jan Valtin on the Comintern militants maxim: ‘There is nothing a communist cannot do’.

# Communism as a definite and particular type of militant practice



Valtin's father

A sailor had returned from Petrograd

Herrmann Knueflgen

Hermann Kruse

Willy Zcympanski

Johnny Dettmer

Bandura

Kazys Kentautas

Waldemar

Heinz Neumann

Ernest Wollweber

## *Gaps in Valtin's account*

- “Be careful about what you say when you meet the comrades higher up. You’ve been away a long time.” “The Comintern,” continues Soeder, “has changed its face. It has been unified. It is now going like a torpedo. One direction only. No more vagaries. No internal discussion. No compromises.” “I was to learn,” comments Valtin, “much more about this change of face during the coming weeks. Zinoviev and Trotsky had been purged. Bukharin was pushed away from the helm of the Comintern. Stalin now dominated Russia and, therefore, the Comintern as well.”
  - - *Comrade Soeder addresses Valtin on his return from jail in the United States*

# Conclusion

'What baseness would you not commit,  
To stamp out baseness?  
If you could change the world  
What would you be too good for?  
Sink in the mire  
Embrace the butcher but  
Change the world.  
It needs it.

Bertolt Brecht  
*The Measures Taken*  
1930

For we knew only too well:  
Even the hatred of squalor  
Makes the brow grow stern.  
Even anger against injustice  
Makes the voice grow harsh. Alas, we  
Who wished to lay the foundations of kindness  
Could not ourselves be kind.

But you, when at last it comes to pass  
That man can help his fellow man,  
Do no judge us  
Too harshly.

Bertolt Brecht  
'To Posterity'  
1939