

Condolences on the death of Sabaratnam Rasendran

8 March 2002

The following is a selection of the many condolence messages received by the Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka) from the Trotskyist movement around the world. In addition to those published below, messages were also sent by others in Germany, and India. The condolences are addressed to SEP General Secretary Wije Dias and some refer to Rajendran—the party name of Sabaratnam Rasendran.

Dear Wije:

It is with deep sadness that we have learned of the untimely death of Comrade S. Rajendran. Please convey our condolences to his family and his comrades.

Rajendran's many years of devoted political service on behalf of the RCL and SEP of Sri Lanka testified to the unflinching strength of his political principles. In a country that has been ravaged by communal conflict, Comrade Rajendran opposed both Sinhalese chauvinism and Tamil nationalism. He counterposed to these historically bankrupt ideologies the perspective of socialist internationalism.

As we mourn his death, we are confident that his example will serve as a source of inspiration to those of the rising generation who will seek a revolutionary alternative to the quagmire of communal politics.

Fraternally,

David North

WSWS Editorial Board Chairman and National Secretary of the SEP (US)

Dear Wije,

It is with deep sadness that we have learned of the death of Comrade Rajendran. Please convey to his family, loved ones, friends and comrades in the SEP the heartfelt condolences of the central committee of the SEP (Australia) and its members.

The loss of Rajendran is a blow not only to the SEP in Sri Lanka, but is keenly felt by the International Committee as a whole.

Our movement is built on great ideas—the great liberating ideas of Marx, carried forward by Trotsky and the International Committee of the Fourth International. Those ideas select the forces to fight for them, and Comrade Rajendran was one of the finest representatives of our program. His 30-year history in our movement, during which he was subject to the stern test of events, and the stresses of that period, is eloquent testimony to that fact.

The work he was undertaking in the last period of his life, the translation of the publications of the ICFI into Tamil, represented an important step forward in the decisive task we have undertaken—the political rearming of the international working class. His contribution will be sorely missed.

In joining with you in mourning his death, we are confident that his life will provide an example for the cadres who will carry the work of our movement into the future.

With deepest regards,

Nick Beams,

WSWS Editorial Board and National Secretary of the SEP (Australia)

Dear Wije,

I was shocked and saddened by the news of Comrade S. Rajendran's death. It is a cruel blow. All the more so as it comes at a time when the coming together of the LTTE and the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie is providing fresh vindication of the proletarian internationalist program for which Comrade Rajendran, the RCL and the Sri Lankan SEP have so courageously fought.

Please convey my condolences and those of all the members of the SEP Canada to Comrade Rajendran's family and to all the members of the SEP of Sri Lanka.

Warm regards and deepest regrets,

Keith Jones,

WSWS Editorial Board and National Secretary of the SEP (Canada)

Dear Comrade Wije,

In early January this year we came to know about Comrade Rajendran's sickness and wished he would have the strength and energy to combat his illness. We are deeply saddened to learn about his passing away and join with our Sri Lankan and international comrades in mourning his death. On behalf of the German Socialist Equality Party we extend our deepest condolences to his wife and their three children, as well as to his friends.

Rajendran was one of the first representatives of the Tamil minority who joined the Revolutionary Communist League, the forerunner of the Sri Lankan SEP, in 1972 to fight for the socialist perspective of the International Committee.

When he joined the party a reactionary political climate was prevailing in Sri Lanka which was primarily created by the

historical betrayal of the LSSP. Ceylon was declared the Republic of Sri Lanka and the constitution for this declaration was written by the LSSP leader Colvin R de Silva. This new constitution provided the legal framework for the further oppression of the Tamil minority. The Tamil parliamentary parties formed the Tamil United Liberation Front and also the radicalisation of the Tamil youth began on a separatist line.

In these circumstances—in the heyday of Tamil nationalist politics—it was not very easy for Tamil workers and youth to make a decision, as Rajendran did, to join the Revolutionary Communist League. At a very earlier stage, Rajendran understood the class roots of the prolonged ethnic conflict and devoted three decades of his life to fighting for the unification of the Sinhala and Tamil workers with the international working class.

He is no more with us. This however does not prevent us from remembering him as an important comrade who made a significant contribution to the development of Trotskyism.

Ulrich Rippert and K. Nesan

On behalf of the Socialist Equality Party (Germany)

Dear Wije,

In addition to the message from the SEP (Germany), I want to once more express my deepest condolences to our comrades, family members and friends of Rajendran. It would not be very easy for you and your comrades to lose a man with whom you have been politically associated for over three decades. I was informed in January of the slight improvement in Rajendran's health, but tragically his condition became worse within days and he passed away. I met him only once at a party conference and I remember him translating your opening report. He suddenly had breathing problems, presumably from asthma, however, he managed to continue to the end.

Considering the political climate in the 1970s his decision to join the party is itself very significant. He had chosen the hard path in terms of the political difficulties of the working class in this period and remained loyal to the cause of socialism throughout his life. He was mainly engaged in translation work and the publication of the Tamil paper *Thollilalar Pathai*. This work played a decisive role in paving the way for the present Tamil members to join the party. He passed away in the midst of political developments which turn in favour of the perspective for which he fought.

We will remember him and honour him as an honest fighter for the Trotskyist perspective.

With warm regards,

Nesan

SEP (Germany)

Dear Wije,

I was saddened to learn of the untimely death of Comrade Rajendran whose loss will be deeply felt by his family and comrades.

I regard it as a privilege to have had the opportunity to work with Comrade Rajendran on several occasions. On first

appearances, he was a quiet, even reserved man, deeply cultured and fluent in three languages. But when discussion turned to politics another dimension was added. He quickly became animated and lively, making his points with feeling and wit. He had a deeply held conviction in the correctness of the principles of our movement, which he had adopted as a young man and fought for with determination and courage for nearly three decades, often in difficult circumstances.

Rajendran was part of a generation of Tamil youth who were radicalised in the early 1970s by their hostility to the entrenched ethnic discrimination they faced and by broader international developments. But unlike many others, who became infatuated with the demand for a separate Tamil state, Rajendran thought deeper and saw further. He rejected the divisive politics that pitted Tamils against Sinhalese and instead was attracted to the conceptions of socialist internationalism: that all workers, regardless of race or religion, shared a common class interest in abolishing oppression and refashioning society on socialist lines.

In the coming period the path that he helped blaze will be followed by many in Sri Lanka and throughout the Indian subcontinent as a new generation looks for a way out of the dead-end of chauvinist politics.

Yours fraternally,

Peter Symonds,

WSWS Editorial Board, Australia

Dear comrades,

The Tamil comrades from Paris send their most heartfelt condolences to our comrades in the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in Sri Lanka for the most untimely death of Comrade Sabaratnam Rasendran. We send our deepest sympathy to his wife and his children for their tragic loss.

The life of Comrade Rasendran is an inspiration to us all. Rasendran fought for the internationalist perspective of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) against all the pressures of Tamil nationalism and Sinhala chauvinism since 1972 when he joined the Trotskyist movement.

We are proud to have worked alongside him in building the Tamil section of the *World Socialist Web Site*. We vow to continue and develop the struggle to build the Tamil section of the WSWS as a revolutionary beacon to Tamil-speaking people all over the world. We dedicate our renewed efforts to the memory of Comrade Rasendran.

Tamil ICFI supporters, Paris



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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