SEP public meeting to commemorate the 16th anniversary of the death of Keerthi Balasuriya

29 January 2004

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) will be holding a public meeting in Colombo on January 31 to commemorate the 16th anniversary of the death of Keerthi Balasuriya, the founding general secretary of the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL), the SEP's forerunner. His untimely death from a sudden heart attack on December 18, 1987, at the age of just 39 was a huge loss for the SEP and the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI).

Keerthi Balasuriya joined the Trotskyist movement at the age of just 17, along with a number of youth, who opposed the Lanka Sama Samaja Party's (LSSP) entry into a coalition government with the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) in 1964. The LSSP's decision represented a complete abandonment of the basic principles of socialist internationalism and had profound political consequences for the working class in Sri Lanka and internationally. Its renunciation of the struggle for the political independence of the working class led directly to the emergence of petty bourgeois movements based on the politics of communalism and ultimately to the outbreak of the country's devastating 20-year civil war.

Keerthi Balasuriya led the struggle against the LSSP's betrayal and forged a section of the ICFI in Sri Lanka. He was a steadfast opponent of opportunism and played a decisive role in defending principles of Trotskyism during the split by the Workers Revolutionary Party in Britain from the ICFI in 1985-86. The lessons of his political life are vital today for the working class in the Indian subcontinent and internationally. The SEP meeting will be devoted to reviewing and analysing his incisive and farsighted contribution to Trotskyism. We invite all workers, youth and intellectuals to attend.

Venue:
YMCA Hall,
Bristol Street,
Colombo Fort
Time: January 31, 3 p.m.

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