

# International condolences on the death of Sri Lankan Trotskyist

**Our correspondents**  
**14 September 2010**

*The British, German and Canadian sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the world Trotskyist movement, sent their condolences on the demise of Piyaseeli Wijegunasingha to the Sri Lankan Socialist Equality Party and her husband SEP General Secretary Wije Dias. The messages, which were read out at the comrade Piyaseeli's funeral on September 6, are published below.*

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Chris Marsden, for the Socialist Equality Party of Britain

Dear comrades,

All of us here in Britain are thinking of you on this sad day, above all of Wije who has suffered such a great loss.

Illness took comrade Piyaseeli too early, but her life was rich and spent in advancing the cause of socialism. Her own work as a Marxist literary and cultural critic and her translations into Sinhala of the work of others has played an invaluable role in the education of the advanced guard of the revolutionary working class. It will continue to do so now she is gone.

Shelley wrote:

*Music, when soft voices die,*

Vibrates in the memory -  
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,  
Live within the sense they quicken.

Piyaseeli will live for Wije, their son Keerthi, family and friends in a thousand such personal remembrances. But someone's intellectual and political labour—the legacy Piyaseeli leaves behind—endures long after such transient memories.

We in Britain did not personally know Piyaseeli. This is our loss. But we do know, admire and respect deeply comrade Wije and we grieve with him.

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Uli Rippert and Peter Schwarz, on behalf of all the members of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG) in Germany.

Dear Wije,

Dear comrades of the SEP,

With consternation and great sadness we have just learnt of the sudden death of your companion Piyaseeli. The death of Piyaseeli robs our international party of a longstanding member and loyal supporter of our movement's socialist perspectives.

Our condolences and solidarity are directed especially to you, comrade Wije and your family. You have not only lost an important political companion but also your beloved partner of many years and mother of your son who staunchly stood alongside you for many decades. We share your sense of pain and assure you at this difficult time of our friendship and affection.

Companion Piyaseeli embodied the very best of a generation, which drew the necessary political consequences from the betrayal of the LSSP and defended the principles of genuine Trotskyism. She then played a key role in training and educating a new generation in Marxism through her books, translations and articles.

While her premature death is a source of great pain, her life was exemplary and will continue to inspire many young comrades. We will steadfastly keep the memory of Piyaseeli alive in our international party. She will continue to live on in our recollections.

On this day of great sadness and mourning, Comrade Wije, we extend you our deepest condolences and our warmest wishes of sympathy and solidarity.

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Keith Jones, National Secretary of the SEP (Canada)

Dear Wije, Keerthi, and the other comrades, relatives, and friends of Piyaseeli,

On behalf of the members and supporters of the Socialist Equality Party (Canada), I extend to you deepest sympathies and join with you in paying tribute to the life and struggle of Comrade Piyaseeli.

Like all of you, I was shocked and saddened by her sudden death.

I only had the chance to speak with Piyaseeli on a couple of

occasions. But I was struck by her warmth, breadth of political and cultural knowledge, and commitment to socialist principles.

More importantly, I know of the wide esteem in which she was held in the SEP Sri Lanka and among the comrades who knew her internationally. While Piyaseeli would, of course, merit respect as the wife of the party general-secretary, the esteem in the party for her was not due to this personal tie, but because of her role as a member of the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL) and party leader in her own right, particularly in her area of special expertise, literary and cultural questions.

Piyaseeli was among the young comrades who took up the difficult struggle to defend political principles under conditions where the betrayal of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), aided and abetted by the Pabloite International, had created great political confusion.

The comrades who founded the RCL were not content with denouncing the LSSP's abandonment of Permanent Revolution and embrace of parliamentary and trade union opportunism, and reactionary Sinhala populism. They fought to understand and explicate the political roots and international significance of the LSSP's betrayal in its adaptation to the reactionary nation-state system established in South Asia between imperialism and the various rival national bourgeoisies as part of the post-war restabilisation of capitalism—a restabilisation only made possible by the betrayals of the Kremlin bureaucracy and its satellite Communist parties.

Piyaseeli's untimely death is a grim reminder that the young people who in 1968 founded the Revolutionary Communist League and fought for revolutionary proletarian internationalism against the petty bourgeois forces who battered off the LSSP's betrayal—the Sinhala chauvinist JVP and the Tamil nationalist LTTE—are no longer young.

But this generation has far from said its last word. They and the cadres that they have trained in partnership with the ICFI now have the opportunity to mount a political offensive for Trotskyism across South Asia—fulfilling the political promise and farsighted perspective of the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India or BLPI.

Not least of the consequences of the LSSP's betrayal was a strengthening of Stalinism in India. The LSSP's passing over to the class enemy coincided with an enormous crisis in the ranks of the Communist Party of India, that arose out of its slavish alliance with the Indian bourgeoisie's Congress Party. The LSSP's betrayal made it impossible for Trotskyists to intervene in that crisis, allowing the claims of first the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and then the Naxalites to represent an alternative to the CPI to go unchallenged—although the breakaway CPIs no less than the parent party supported and support the entire Stalinist legacy, from the two-stage theory of revolution through the bloody repression of the Trotskyists.

Today the Stalinists in India are in a state of advanced decomposition. The CPM is politically threadbare, hailing China as a socialist country and pointing to the collapse of the Soviet Union, about which it has had virtually nothing to say, as proof that “socialism is a far off cry.” The Left Front governments it leads in West Bengal and Kerala are facing electoral defeat, having alienated their working class and poor toiler supporters through their support at both the state and national level for the pro-market program of the Indian bourgeoisie. Meanwhile, growing number of workers and youth are recognizing that the Naxalites perspective of peasant- and tribal-based protracted guerilla war is a reactionary blind alley, that serves to politically paralyze the working class and separate the tribals and other oppressed layers from the proletariat. The Maoists' armed struggle complements their crass opportunist maneuvering with representatives of the Indian bourgeoisie—alliances they justify in the crudest Stalinist terms as part of the anti-feudal national democratic, that is capitalist, revolution.

I hope some of Comrade Piyaseeli's writings will be translated into English and one or more native Indian languages as part of an offensive for Trotskyism in South Asia. This will involve bringing before the working class not only exposures of the reactionary politics of the contemporary Stalinist parties and a critique of the political record and tradition of the CPI, but the summoning up of the entire legacy of the struggle waged by Trotsky, the Left Opposition and the Fourth International against the bureaucratic caste that usurped power in the USSR and the Stalinist perversion of Marxism.

An important part of this struggle will be to bring the lessons of the RCL-SEP's struggle for the program of Permanent Revolution as the theoretical articulation of the strategy of world socialist revolution to the workers and toilers of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Asia as a whole. The RCL-SEP's principled defence of the Tamil people, in opposition to the savagery of the Sri Lankan state, but also the divisive and reactionary perspective of Tamil separatism, and its championing of the unity of the working class, Sinhala and Tamil, in the struggle for the Socialist United States of Sri Lanka and Tamil Eelam will serve as an example to revolutionists throughout South Asia, where the reactionary bourgeoisie foments communal, caste and ethnic politics at every turn.

Comrade Piyaseeli is no more, but her struggle must and will endure in this movement.



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