

More letters from international comrades on the death of Dave Hyland

18 December 2013

David Edward Hyland passed away on the night of December 8. He was the leader of the faction of the old Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) of Britain that declared its support for the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and opposed the attempt of the party's leadership, Gerry Healy, Cliff Slaughter and Mike Banda, to liquidate the Trotskyist movement in Britain and internationally. Following the split of the WRP from the ICFI in 1986, he became national secretary of the British section—a position he held until he retired in 1998 due to ill health. (See: David Edward Hyland: March 7, 1947—December 8, 2013).

Within hours of Dave's death, letters of condolence began to arrive from all over the world, sent to his wife, Eileen, and his children, Julie, Tony, Claire and Paula, and to Dave's comrades in the Socialist Equality Party of Britain. They testify to the esteem in which Dave Hyland was held by comrades in the UK and internationally. (See: Letters on the death of Dave Hyland).

Below we publish a second selection of letters sent by Dave's international comrades.

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Dear Eileen, Julie and Tony,

It is with great sadness that I heard of the death of Dave and I wish to express my deepest sympathy for you and his family as well as his comrades and friends.

I met Dave in the party summer camp in Germany in 1987, when I was part of a group of Tamil exiles from Sri Lanka seeking to find a way out of the bourgeois nationalist conceptions which dominated the thinking of Tamil freedom fighters against the racist oppression of the Sri Lanka bourgeoisie. We met at many subsequent camps.

We wanted to know the relationship between the degeneration of the WRP and the Tamil struggle. He

was able to explain clearly to us how, in alliance with the ICFI, the split in the WRP from the degenerate leadership of Healy, Banda and Slaughter was of vital significance in understanding our experiences in Sri Lanka and how the catastrophic politics of the WRP of adaptation to the bourgeois nationalists had caused so much trouble for us.

The question of an international perspective was new to us—we hadn't thought in an international way.

He spoke of the LSSP and its relationship with Pabloism and how the degeneration of the WRP had destroyed a whole generation of workers and oppressed masses in Sri Lanka by giving support to bourgeois nationalists like Balasingham, the theoretician of the LTTE.

He helped us to become international Trotskyists.

I think that the experience of the British comrades in fighting in the working class against the colonial oppression of British imperialism, and working in Britain with immigrants from the colonies gave them a special sensitivity to our situation. Dave, like comrades such as Vicky and Barbara, would always come and speak with us, not only on political questions but about our situation in exile.

Even when he was already ill and had to walk with a stick he would always come over and talk to me and the other Tamil comrades. He never forgot us. He was always very serious.

I wish you strength to get over this difficult time and continue Dave's fight as we intend to do.

Warmest regards,

Gnana

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Dear Julie,

I just learned from Chris of your father's death. It's a loss I feel deeply and that I'm sure is shared by all those who had the privilege of knowing him, or even

reading the wonderful articles that he wrote in his later years. He was a unique figure in the development of the International Committee and played an invaluable role in the struggle against the degeneration of the Workers Revolutionary Party.

I will always remember him from the long days in Barnsley—and elsewhere—working on documents on the WRP, and driving from Sheffield to London with him and talking about the impact that Nat King Cole had on him as a young man and his love of popular music. I had always hoped to see him again.

Nelly and I wanted you to know that our thoughts are with you.

Bill Van Auken

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Dear Julie,

I just heard the news about Dave. It goes without saying that I am thinking of you and Tony and Eileen, and of course every comrade whose lives Dave touched in his decades-long struggle to build a revolutionary leadership in the working class.

He was a powerful representative of Trotskyism and of a whole generation of workers attracted and trained by the International Committee. The fact that he found the way out of the morass of opportunism into which the WRP had sunk was a development that will never be forgotten. It was through his leadership that the majority of the working class cadres and the best elements of the party in Britain were won to the struggle of the International Committee against the resurgence of Pabloism within our own movement.

This made possible the final settling of accounts with opportunism within the ICFI, the successful conclusion to the nearly 35 year struggle against Pabloism. The ability of the IC to attract the support of comrades in Britain at this decisive moment, when the fate of the IC hung in the balance, was of enormous significance. And the contributions Dave made even in recent years, when he struggled to survive life-threatening illness, flowed directly from this earlier training and were equally illustrative of the kind of man he was.

On a personal note, I am so grateful for the opportunity to see Dave and Eileen last year. The chance to discuss our political work and to witness Dave's undiminished enthusiasm and commitment, was something to be treasured not for any sentimental reasons but because it demonstrated the power of

Marxism in the most concrete and moving way.

Your comrade,

Fred M

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Dear Julie and Tony,

I was very sorry to hear the news of the passing away of your father Dave. At the time I was with Dave N, Nick, Linda, and Cheryl, who all had the privilege of knowing him personally, and they all spoke of the strengths of his character and personality.

The obituary prepared by Chris is a reminder of the crucial role he played in the defence of Trotskyism and the IC, which we rightly stressed in the Historical and International Foundations of the SEP. As well, it was a moving insight into his personal dedication to, and sacrifice for, the interests of the international working class. The articles that Dave wrote over recent years continued his immense contribution to the ICFI, and they were all the more powerful to me given that I was aware of the ill-health he suffered while researching and preparing them. He was a remarkable man.

You and your families, as well as all Dave's comrades and friends in Britain and around the world, have my deepest sympathy at this time

Best regards,

James Cogan



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