Condolences from Dave Hyland's German comrades

3 January 2014

David Edward Hyland passed away on the night of December 8, 2013. 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. The letters testify to the esteem in which Dave Hyland was held by comrades in the UK and internationally.

Below, we publish condolences sent by some of Dave's comrades from the Socialist Equality Party of Germany.

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Dear Julie,

I want to offer my deepest condolences and sympathy to you and Eileen and your entire family. I must admit that I find it difficult to find the right words. I heard about Dave's death when I was in the train back to Berlin on Monday night.

Of course, I knew about his bad condition, but one is always shocked when it finally happens. It's such a big loss for you and your family, but of course for our whole movement.

Chris's obituary was really important in explaining Dave's critical role during the split. How he obtained David North's critique, studied it, rang Comrade North, and then took up the fight for the historical and international foundations of the International Committee of the Fourth International within the Workers Revolutionary Party. Chris makes the point that Dave's decision at this important point was critical for reorienting a significant section of the British membership. One can hardly overestimate the significance of this.

For us, as a younger generation of Trotskyists, it is really important to understand that we are a product of all these struggles and that we have to assimilate them to carry the struggle forward. I am glad that I had the chance to meet Dave once in 2012 at the Socialist Equality Party Congress in Manchester. Despite his illness, he spoke very powerfully and was clearly an inspiration.

And so was his letter to Bettina, which I received a couple of days before he died. I want to read it more carefully again. I don't know the circumstances of his death, but I know that he was very ill and had to suffer a lot for quite a long time. It always sounds a bit strange, but I hope his physical death was a kind of relief for him. Politically, he will live on in the work of our movement in Europe and internationally.

Johannes

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Dear Eileen, Julie and Tony,

I received the news of the death of comrade Dave with a profound sadness.

I still recall very vividly the last time I saw Dave in Manchester during the SEP Congress in November 2012 and how he managed, sitting in the wheelchair and relying on oxygen to assist his breathing, to make his contribution, analyzing how the bureaucrats and the fake lefts disarm the working class.

When thinking of Dave, I still visualize a young family who drew my attention in being always present at every WRP meeting in London. That family was Dave, Eileen and the little twin daughters—with me not knowing in those days that there was a connection between Julie and Tony and this great family.

Please pass on my heartfelt condolences also to Claire and Paula, to Jack, Tania, Yasmin and her little sister

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Shanae.

Françoise

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Dear Julie

I was really sorry to hear of Dave's passing and would like to send you and your family my condolences. His contributions during the first summer school after the split with the Workers Revolutionary Party and his encouragement played a big role in getting me back into the discussion and clarifying vital issues.

I could also appreciate his vivid concern for political development in the working class in Germany and France during his subsequent visits in Essen.

Later, I must say, I didn't realize how ill he was in general, partly because he himself would strictly put political work/duty first and not want to show any signs of being unwell. I read his last letter to the German comrades with emotion and appreciated very much its clarity, frankness and political optimism.

I wish you and your family all the best.

Francis D.

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Dear Eileen, Julie and Tony,

Although we had expected the sad news, we were deeply shocked to hear about the passing away of Dave. I could not agree more with Chris' words that he was a man who was ready to give everything, while demanding nothing for himself in return, in the struggle for socialism.

I remember very vividly when, during a visit to Frankfurt/Main, we had to take him to hospital. It must have been around 1988. Although he obviously was in bad pain, he didn't want comrades to notice. I recall being troubled by the impression that Dave knew it was very serious, but being both proud and modest, he would not complain.

Our thoughts are with you.

Andrea

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Dear Eileen, Dear Julie,

Dear Tony and Tania and all members of your family,

Dear Chris and Dietmar,

Yesterday I got the sad news of comrade Dave's death. My deepest sympathy to all of you.

I—as all members of the ICFI who met him—will remember Dave as the strong and resolute working class leader. Unfortunately, I wasn't for many years in Britain (I will change that), so I couldn't see him in the last years. But his strong letter to Bettina, which I got a few days ago, is a little comfort to me.

In contemplation of his death, he stressed his firm conviction that all of his conscious life he did in general the right thing—to build the ICFI as the proletarian leadership. As Dave wrote, for that reason there is no need to be sad for him. However, I am sad. His far too early death is a great loss.

I followed his articles in the last period with great interest. Dave represented the best of the British working class. I'm proud to have known him and to be a part of the organization for which he devoted his life.

With warmest regards,

Dietmar

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Dear Eileen, Dear Julie, Dear Tony,

Please accept our heartfelt condolences. Even though we knew about the terminal nature of Dave's illness, we were deeply affected when the sad news arrived yesterday morning.

All of us know that comrade Dave played an indispensable role during the split of 1985 in order to win the best forces within the old WRP to the IC. Without his determined struggle for the principles of Trotskyism, there would be no British section of the IC in its present form.

Since this time, Gitta and I met Dave at many meetings and schools and we came to know and value him as a warm-hearted and attentive comrade.

Nobody could have written an obituary of Colin Redgrave comparable to Dave's. We were fascinated by the clear and vivid manner in which he described the relationship of the SLL to intellectuals and artists. Despite his severe illness, he never lost confidence in our political perspectives and remained convinced of them until the very end.

Lude & Gitta

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