

Kathryn Davron: March 2, 1950—May 1, 2014

Chris Marsden, Julie Hyland

7 May 2014

It is with great sadness that the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in Britain informs readers of the *World Socialist Web Site* of the death of Comrade Kathryn Davron.

Kath was a Trotskyist all her adult life. Her death follows a four-year struggle against cancer, throughout which she displayed her usual attributes of courage and determination.

Born Kathryn Reilly in Salford, Greater Manchester, she came from an Irish working class background. Her mother, Nora, died when Kath was just nine years old, leaving her father George to raise five children alone.

From her teens, Kath was attracted to socialism, especially through her familiarity with the classic work by Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, which dealt extensively with the area in which she grew up.

When she tried to explain her own political evolution, Kath once said that she felt that socialism was in the DNA of her childhood home. There is a lot of truth in this observation. She was delighted to find out, just before she died, that a location near the old Salford docks, near her birthplace, had hosted speaking engagements by, among others, August Bebel, Karl Liebknecht and James Connolly.

Aged just 14, Kath began reading the *Soviet Weekly* and the *Daily Worker*. This was, in part, a product of her admiration for the cultural achievements associated with the Russian Revolution. She loved ballet and could cite the names of many dancers. The same held true for opera. But even in these early years, she could not reconcile herself to the contrast between these admirable elements of Soviet society and her hostility to the repression practised by the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Aged 21, while pregnant with her eldest son, she came across a lone member of the Socialist Labour League (forerunner of the Workers Revolutionary Party and the British section of the International Committee

of the Fourth International) campaigning on Salford High Street.

This was Kath's introduction to Trotskyism. Impressed by his dedication and patience, she recalled how she listened attentively to his explanation of Trotsky's opposition to Stalinism and its betrayal of the October revolution and the significance of the founding of the Fourth International.

Kath explained while in hospital, "This meant everything to me. It meant that not everything was corrupt. There were those who had fought unceasingly for socialism in the working class, who offered a spotless banner."

She rooted her decision to support the International Committee of the Fourth International in its fight against the leadership of the Workers Revolutionary Party in 1985-1986 in these early experiences. Visited at the time by a supporter of the Cliff Slaughter/Michael Banda faction—the main theoreticians of the WRP's betrayal of Trotskyism—she responded angrily to their spurious claim of the "equal degeneration" of the ICFI.

From that moment on, Kath became a supporter of the WRP Internationalists, the tendency founded by Dave Hyland to defend the ICFI and, following Banda/Slaughter's split from the ICFI, a founding member of the International Communist Party (ICP), the forerunner of the SEP.

She spoke with affection and respect for the international comrades she had met during this struggle, especially David North, Larry Roberts, Keerthi Balasuriya, Uli Rippert and Peter Schwarz. She explained that she could not put into words the gratitude she felt towards North for having led the struggle against the WRP. "What do you say to a surgeon who saves your life?" she asked.

For an extended period, Kath served on the Central Committee of the ICP, before moving to Germany and

assuming membership of the Partei fur Soziale Gleichheit (PSG) with her husband, Frances.

Kath was pugnacious, blunt in her opinions and fiercely loyal to her class and her party. Nothing epitomises this better than her actions during the last weeks of her life. We visited Kath on several occasions. During one discussion, Kath said she hoped she had not made too many mistakes. When told that she had, in fact, made all the right calls at every crucial political juncture, she smiled and said, “That’s right. That’s what I did.”

The personal satisfaction she derived from the political decisions she made during her life was surpassed only by the immense pride she had in her three children—Martyn, Michael and Myriam—whom she loved dearly.

After being told there was nothing further that could be done medically to prolong her life, Kath was still determined to listen in at her hospice to the online May Day rally held May 4 by the ICFI. As it was, she died on May 1, International Workers' Day.

As well as her husband and children, Kath leaves behind her sister Dot and three grandchildren, Reuben, Annalise and Tallulah.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact