

Greetings to veteran Sri Lankan Trotskyist K. Ratnayake on his 80th birthday

David North

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The following greetings were sent by David North, Chairman of the International Editorial Board of the World Socialist Web Site, to a gathering in Colombo, Sri Lanka on November 14. It marked the 80th birthday of K. Ratnayake, a leading member of the Socialist Equality Party who has been active in the world Trotskyist movement for more than 60 years.

Dear Comrade Ratnayake,

Please accept my congratulations and most affectionate best wishes on the occasion of your eightieth birthday.

This date marks not only a significant personal milestone. Six of the eight decades of your life have been inextricably connected to the fight for Trotskyism, the defense of the International Committee, and the building of the Fourth International as the World Party of Socialist Revolution.

Your life spans a vast portion of the history of the Fourth International. You celebrated your tenth birthday only two days before the publication of the Open Letter, on November 16, 1953, which announced the break with the anti-Trotskyist International Secretariat controlled by Pablo and Mandel and the founding of the International Committee of the Fourth International. Of course, at that stage of your life, you could not have known of the struggles unfolding in the leadership of the Fourth International, let alone their vast implications for the fate of the Trotskyist movement in Sri Lanka and the course of your entire adult life.

But the entry of the LSSP into a bourgeois coalition government in June 1964 occurred when you, now approaching the age of 21, were sufficiently imbued with a sense of political principles to recoil from this crass betrayal of revolutionary socialism and the Trotskyist program of Permanent Revolution. In the

critical years that followed, you played a decisive role in the founding of the Revolutionary Communist League in 1968.

A survey of your life would require nothing less than a detailed history of the Sri Lankan section of the ICFI. You have been deeply and centrally involved in all the critical struggles of the section since its founding 55 years ago.

But what must be stressed, in what can only be the briefest summing up of your decades of revolutionary activity, is that you have personified the political resilience, commitment to political program and principles, and unflinching personal courage upon which the fight for socialism depends. And to these qualities one must add, as all your comrades and co-workers in the Sri Lankan SEP, the editorial board of the WSWs, and the International Committee will attest to, an extraordinary capacity for sustained hard work.

Dear Ratnayake, I have been privileged to work closely with you for just short of four decades. I know you too well to suggest that you are entitled to make concessions to the challenges of the ageing process. You would dismiss such concerns out of hand. And so allow me to conclude this birthday message by stating that I look forward to the continuation of our political work in this new period of global revolutionary upsurge.

Your comrade,

David



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