

A tribute to Comrade Halil Çelik

David North

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We are publishing here the tribute given by David North, chairperson of the International Editorial Board of the World Socialist Web Site and Socialist Equality Party (US), to Halil Çelik, founder and leader of the Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu which is the Turkish section of the International Committee of the Fourth International. North's remarks were read at a memorial meeting for Halil on the fifth anniversary of his death held Sunday, January 14 in Istanbul.

It is difficult to believe that five years have already passed since the untimely death of Comrade Halil. The personality of this courageous and indefatigable revolutionary remains so intensely vivid: the forcefulness of his arguments, the expanse of his intellectual and cultural interests, his generous spirit, confident optimism and remarkable sense of humor.

Comrade Halil devoted his entire adult life—forty-one years—to the struggle for socialism. He endured persecution, prison, and—most difficult of all—the betrayals of organizations and tendencies that ignored the lessons of history and repudiated principles for short-term political advantages. But Halil drew the lessons of these experiences and continued, despite immense objective difficulties, to work for the development of a genuine revolutionary party of the working class.

Comrade Halil established contact with the International Committee after decades of political work. The conclusions that he had drawn from his own experiences with the betrayals of Stalinism, Maoism, the corrupt trade union bureaucracies and the various branches of Pabloite opportunism intersected with the ICFI's historical defense of the heritage of the October Revolution and Trotskyist strategy of world socialist revolution.

The most important lesson that Comrade Halil drew from his own experience was that the construction of a genuine revolutionary party required the systematic

education of its cadre in the entire history of the struggle waged by the Trotskyist movement in the aftermath of the October Revolution, from its origins in 1923, through the founding of the Fourth International in 1938, the formation of the International Committee in 1953, the subsequent protracted struggle against Pabloite revisionism, to the ICFI's break with the national opportunism of the British Workers Revolutionary Party in 1985-86.

The work that Comrade Halil conducted in the final years of his life—concentrated on the education of a young cadre and their development as Trotskyist cadre of the International Committee—is of enduring historical significance. Though Halil is no longer with us, his life work continues in the work of the cadre of the Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu.

Long live the memory of Comrade Halil Çelik!



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