

# Ananda Daulagala (1948–2025), a longstanding Trotskyist leader in Sri Lanka

Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka)  
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Ananda Daulagala, a veteran Trotskyist leader of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), the Sri Lankan section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), passed away on August 13 at the age of 77. He is survived by his wife, Sriyani, daughter, Viduranga, two sons, Samantha and Asanka, and eight grandchildren.

Daulagala dedicated more than four decades of his life to the struggle for the Trotskyist principles of international socialism until prolonged illness curtailed his work. His funeral, held on August 14 at the Mahaiyawa Cemetery in Kandy, was attended by hundreds of family members, comrades and friends.

Daulagala was born on January 22, 1948, in Ukuwela, Nugapitiya, Matale in the Central Province. He was the second of six children. His father was a school principal and his mother a housewife. He attended St. Thomas College in Matale, excelling both academically and athletically. He held a black belt in karate. His wife Sriyani recalled that he was also a strong swimmer who rescued at least 10 people from drowning. In 1969, he completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in Geography, Economics and Sinhala at the University of Peradeniya.

The Revolutionary Communist League (RCL), the predecessor of the SEP, had a strong presence at Peradeniya University at the time. Daulagala, as a student, was a close supporter of the Virodaya Group, which led to the formation of the RCL in 1968. Though not yet active in politics, he had a deep respect for the program of Trotskyism and defended members of the Virodaya Group against physical attacks from Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) thugs. In the following decade, he immersed himself in Marxist literature and became a regular reader of the RCL's Sinhala language newspaper, *Kamkaru Puwath* (Workers News) which became *Kamkaru Mawatha* (Workers Path).

The turning point in Daulagala's political life came after the 1980 general strike against the United National Party (UNP) government, which used its emergency powers to dismiss 100,000 striking public sector workers. Then employed as a cooperative inspector, he recognised the significance of the RCL's call to transform the strike into a political struggle against the government based on a socialist program. While the trade unions, opposition parties and radical groups insisted the strike was "non-political" and refused to confront President J.R. Jayawardene, Daulagala backed the RCL's position.

Convinced of the RCL's program, Daulagala immediately decided to join the party, becoming active in its Kandy branch

where he later served for many years as its secretary. Despite enormous economic difficulties after being dismissed for participating in the July 1980 strike, he remained steadfast in building the revolutionary party. During this period, the UNP government cracked down on workers and stoked up anti-Tamil chauvinism to divide and weaken the working class that culminated in the war against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Daulagala and his comrades took a courageous stand against the racist war as part of the RCL's campaign.

Daulagala led comrades in extensive regular campaigns with the RCL's Sinhala and Tamil newspapers—*Kamkaru Mawatha* and *Tholilalar Pathai*—in Kandy. Among workers, rural poor and small businessmen in areas such as Mahaiyyawa, Heerassagala and Hanthana, he became widely known as the "*Kamkaru Mawatha* comrade."

He also organised regular campaigns and discussions at Peradeniya University with students, lecturers and non-academic staff, efforts that contributed to the formation of a branch of the Young Socialists (YS), then the RCL's youth wing, on the campus in mid-1987. The current SEP General Secretary Deepal Jayasekara was among the students politically influenced and educated by Daulagala. Jayasekara fondly remembers the many theoretical and political discussions Daulagala had with him that inspired him to join the RCL.

Daulagala consistently stressed that the working class is the decisive revolutionary force in capitalist society and that students must turn towards the working class in the struggle against bourgeois rule. Even those who disagreed with the Trotskyist perspective recognised the seriousness of his message. He was unsparing in his criticism of academics who offered false gestures of solidarity with Marxism, and denounced their cowardice.

Comrades recall Daulagala's political and theoretical contributions in discussions, noting his precision in Marxist analysis. During campaigns, he stressed that the task was not merely to sell newspapers, but to patiently explain the party's program and perspective and the international political situation to workers and youth, even in the face of hostility. He often cited Lenin's description of the newspaper *Iskra* as a "collective propagandist, collective agitator and collective organiser" to underscore the central role of the party press. Daulagala urged young comrades to study English, read Marxist literature widely and engage with the *Bulletin* published by the Workers League, the

predecessor of the SEP in the United States.

Daulagala was victimised on several occasions because of his principled political stance. He was arrested in 1984 and detained for 24 days during the RCL's campaign against the UNP's "White Paper" for the privatisation of education. He was dismissed from his job in the Department of Cooperatives on false charges. The government was ultimately forced to reinstate him, as a result of the RCL's campaign against this witch-hunt.

Daulagala's political engagement deepened following the 1985–86 split in the ICFI with the Workers Revolutionary Party, its former British section, after its protracted degeneration. Immersed in the RCL's intensive theoretical and political work, he closely followed the political developments and, with his comrades, committed himself to strengthening the party's roots in the working class and among youth and the rural poor.

The UNP government confronted a severe crisis amid the ongoing communal war against the LTTE. In July 1987, President Jayawardene sought the assistance of Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's intervention that resulted in the Indo-Lanka Accord, which was backed by US imperialism and the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union. Tens of thousands of so-called Indian peacekeeping troops were deployed in the island's North and East to disarm the LTTE and suppress Tamil resistance in the North and East. Sri Lankan troops were redeployed to the South to deal with growing social unrest, particularly among rural youth, against the government's austerity measures.

The RCL opposed the Accord from the standpoint of proletarian internationalism, calling for the unity of the working class in Sri Lanka and India against military intervention. A major statement published by the ICFI, entitled "The Situation in Sri Lanka and the Political Tasks of the Revolutionary Communist League," called for the establishment of a United Socialist States of Sri Lanka and Tamil Eelam. It categorically emphasised that the democratic rights of Tamils could only be realised through a united struggle of the working class for socialism.

The JVP launched a reactionary nationalist campaign against the Indo-Lanka Accord based on Sinhala chauvinism, denouncing it as a threat to the nation's "territorial integrity" while ignoring the repression by the UNP government and Indian peacekeepers. It rejected any, even limited, devolution of powers for the Tamil minority and launched a violent revolt in defence of the unitary capitalist state.

In late 1987, JVP thugs issued death threats against YS members at Peradeniya University, demanding they stop political activities on the campus. Daulagala played a central role in organising the courageous RCL/YS campaign in defence of the threatened YS comrades. He held discussions with YS members at his home to politically strengthen and prepare them for the campaign, which successfully forced the JVP to retreat.

The JVP's fascist thuggery was widespread, sabotaging workers' struggles, derailing mass opposition and channeling discontent into chauvinist anti-India agitation that ultimately bolstered both imperialism and the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie. JVP gunmen murdered hundreds of workers, youth and rural poor, including trade unionists and political opponents who refused to support its campaign, acting in tandem with the UNP

government's murderous police campaign to suppress workers, youth and rural poor.

JVP thugs shot and killed three RCL members—R.A Pitawela in Welimada on November 12, 1988, P.H. Gunapala in Peradeniya on December 23, 1988, and Gretian Geekiyana in Chilaw on June 23, 1989.

Daulagala courageously led the Kandy branch despite grave threats from both the state and JVP fascist forces. His home served as a safe house for young party members. He organised the RCL's presence at the funeral of P.H. Gunapala, a non-academic worker at Peradeniya University, murdered by the JVP for defying its orders. Daulagala played a leading role in the RCL's campaign for a united front of working-class parties and organisations against the murderous activities of both the JVP and UNP government.

Daulagala, who was fluent in English, was in charge of the party's translation committee until prevented by his illness. After the establishment of the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) in 1998, he translated hundreds, if not thousands, of articles into Sinhala, including important documents. He was very frustrated when he lost the use of his hands and fingers due to his chronic illness. Yet, he asked his wife Sriyani to read WSWS articles to him until his very last days.

Sriyani said that although Daulagala rarely showed his affection, he loved deeply. "Beneath his tough exterior, he was a gentle and very loveable person," she said. She fondly remembered his favorite song of eternal love by the maestro W.D. Amaradeva, which he often murmured to her, saying it had been written and sung for them.

At the funeral, Daulagala's daughter Viduranga said his children deeply missed their father, whom she described as "a giant person." Speaking at the memorial meeting, SEP Political Committee member Pani Wijesiriwardena recounted a conversation with her, in which she characterised her father as a dedicated party fighter, who devoted his life not only to his own children but to the future of children everywhere.

The Socialist Equality Party salutes this longstanding Trotskyist revolutionary.



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