

In Tribute to Phyllis Jacobson

JULIE AND PHYLLIS JACOBSON LAUNCHED *New Politics* in the early 1960s, when they saw the absence of a voice for authentic left-socialist thought following the demise of the Independent Socialist current of the previous period. Ironically, although it was a time of reborn activism for civil rights, peace and what we now call “global justice,” the movement for a socialist politics fiercely independent of Washington, Moscow and Beijing had not organizationally survived to see it.

New Politics, along with those activists who a few years later initiated the Independent Socialist Clubs, were instrumental in giving the movement a new beginning. *New Politics* brought to the international left’s attention the Polish Marxists Kuron and Modzelewski’s “Open Letter to the Party,” among other seminal texts including Hal Draper’s “The Two Souls of Socialism” and “Origins of the Middle East Crisis.”

Julie and Phyllis were a remarkable team, but by all accounts Phyllis in particular was the guts and glue of the magazine’s production, circulation and financial management. And so it was again when they relaunched the journal after an eight-year lapse in the 1980s to address the new movements of that day, and through the tumultuous decade and more following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the monstrous bureaucratic tyranny that went under that grotesque label, “actually existing socialism.”

It’s an interesting coincidence that the years of Phyllis’s life, 1922-2010, match those of Howard Zinn. Zinn of course is justifiably famous, but fewer people really understand the contributions of Phyllis and those like her who are the stalwarts and geniuses of organization. There can be

no socialist movement without people like Phyllis Jacobson,
and there is no better testament to her life than the work of
the team that keeps New Politics alive and kicking.

David Finkel

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