

An appreciation of Comrade Helen Halyard

Ed Bergonzi
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We are publishing here the tribute to Helen Halyard written by Ed Bergonzi, a member of the Trotskyist movement in the US for more than 50 years. Comrade Helen, a leader of the Socialist Equality Party (US) and the International Committee of the Fourth International for more than half a century, died suddenly on November 28 at the age of 73.

I am shocked and aggrieved by the sudden passing of Comrade Helen. I have known Helen for more than 50 years. She has been a dear friend and comrade, and her death leaves an empty space that will not easily be filled. Helen joined the Workers League during campaigns among urban working class black and Hispanic youth who were becoming radicalized by the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, and the deteriorating social conditions they confronted.

From the beginning, Comrade Helen stood out. I recall her determination to develop herself politically. She recognized that she had to assimilate the lessons of the history of the Trotskyist movement, and to educate herself in the fundamentals of Marxism, as both a theoretical orientation to the objective crisis of capitalism, and as a guide to practice. In particular, Helen was won to the perspective of building the revolutionary proletarian party, against all forms of opportunism, the liquidationist outlook of Pabloite revisionism foremost among them.

It was this strength and determination, attributes she shared with many of the younger comrades who had joined the Workers League during this formative period, that fortified her against the political collapse of its national secretary, Tim Wohlforth, and a decade later in the fight against the national opportunist degeneration of the Workers Revolutionary Party in Britain. It has been said that revolutionists are not born, they are forged. This is certainly true for Comrade Helen, who became, as a result of these seminal experiences, a recognized leader of the international

Trotskyist movement.

I have had ample opportunity to work with Comrade Helen over the years, and I will always cherish those experiences. Helen was always rock solid on questions of political principle, while projecting an accessibility and a patience which gained the respect and admiration, even a certain endearment, from the workers and youth she encountered.

It is a cruel fate that has deprived you, Helen, from witnessing the revolutionary upsurge of the working class in this the decade of World Socialist Revolution. However, you have played a central role in laying the foundation for these coming great events. I will always remember your intelligence, humanity and irrepressible spirit. We in the International Committee of the Fourth International will keep your memory fresh, as we lead the working class to put an end to this rotten capitalist system.



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