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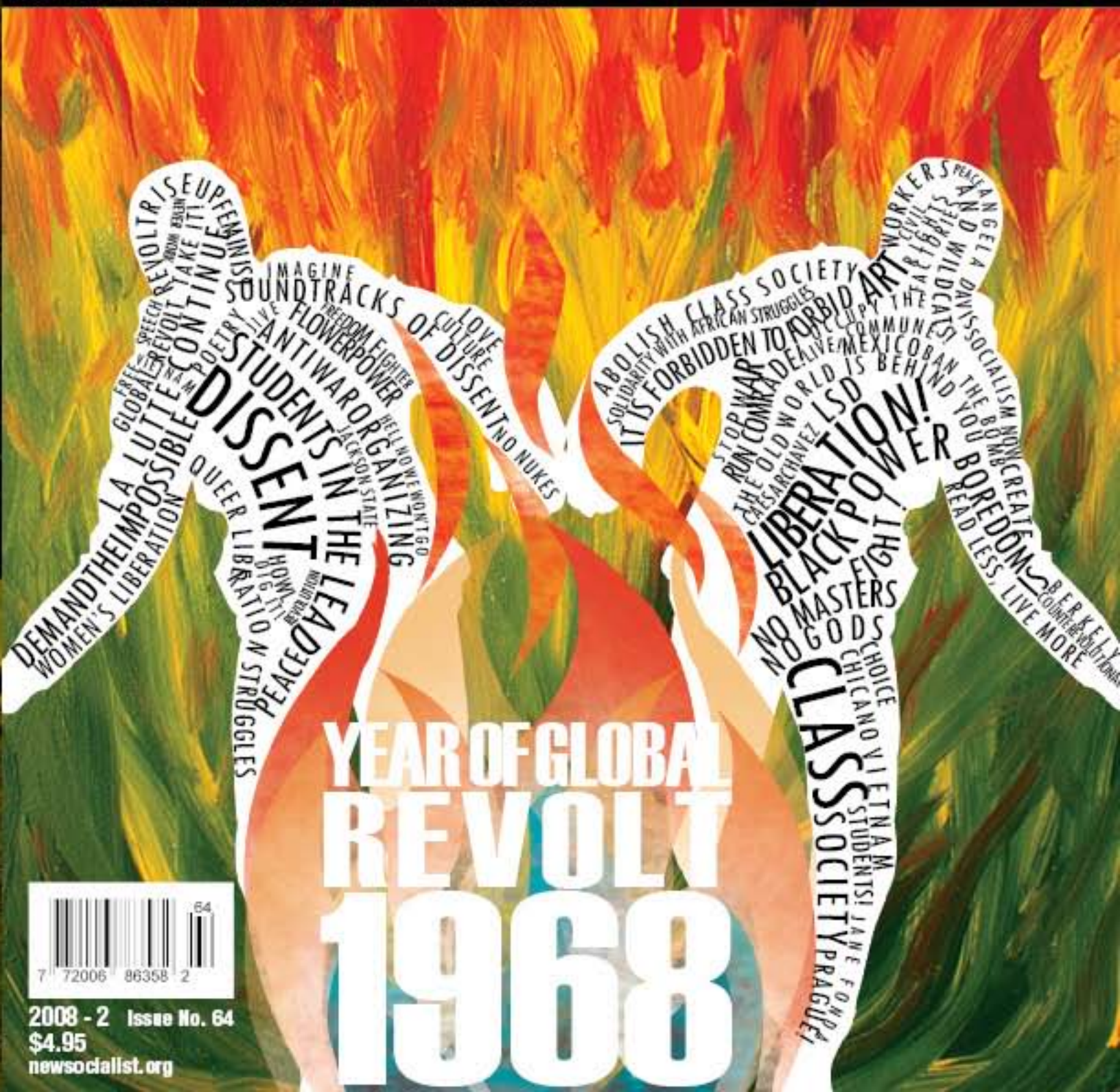
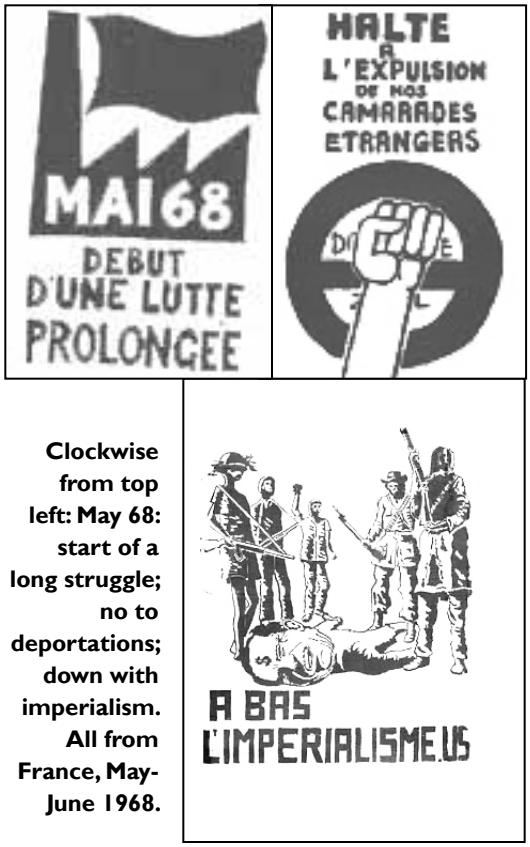
IDEAS FOR RADICAL CHANGE



2008 - 2 Issue No. 64
$4.95
newsocialist.org

1968 EXPLODING BOUNDARIES OF THE POSSIBLE

National liberation movements. Anti-war actions. Student protest. Labour unrest. Black Power, Red Power. Women's liberation, gay liberation, lesbian liberation. Soul music, folk music, psychedelic rock. Forty years ago, amidst bloody war and brutal police repression, masses of people around the world exploded the boundaries of what was possible. They were excessive in everything they did. They debated, pounded tables, swore, wrote poetic political tracts and political poems, designed labyrinthine posters, drove across the continent, marched, waved placards, fought police. The new left woke up and tried to devise a new politics to change the world. The movements provoked each other, inspired each other, intertwined, shed light on each other's limits and weaknesses. This was a revolutionary time, a time to imagine another world, a just world.



Clockwise from top left: May 68: start of a long struggle; no to deportations; down with imperialism. All from France, May-June 1968.

That was 40 years ago, 1968. Now, in 2008, it seems unimaginable that such an explosion of radical political power and creativity is possible. Theories of human nature and human society proliferate, thoroughly explaining in no uncertain terms why radical change will never happen.

And for most of us, this is our experience of the world. As mobilizations of the mid-60s to mid-70s were defeated, cultural expressions became commodities to be sold as yuppie chic, radical leaders were co-opted, the horizon of what was possible progressively narrowed. It began to seem inevitable that all attempts to change the world in radical ways were doomed to replicate the very power structures and oppressions that they opposed. Many ex-radicals in the academy took up a postmodernist stance, fixating on "difference" instead of searching for the basis for solidarity. The disillusioned turned away from political practice to a depoliticized practice of culture, lifestyle. The individual gained ascendency over the collective. Subversion was favoured over rebellion.

This is our experience of the world. Parents of the boom times in the 1960s used to tell their children, "The world is your oyster." The Beatles, Timothy Leary, Jack Kerouac were voices of rebellion against the conformism required by the labour market. Now, a full time 9-to-5 job with benefits is a rare privilege. Tens of thousands of people are being knocked out of their jobs in the space of a month (55,200 in Canada in July, 2008). As jobs become deskilled and lower-wage, people are more and more forced to take on multiple jobs to survive. Faced with major tuition increases, students work their way through school and keep working when they graduate to service an life of endless debt that only begins with school, then expands to encompass every other aspect of life.

There is no time for politics. Time has sped up, we're all crushed by the burden of our busyness, our multiple jobs, our long commutes, our caregiving responsibilities at home (who can afford to pay for childcare, eldercare, care for the wounded and infirm?). We have no time to think, let alone protest. We have all been turned into exhausted, dehumanized zombies, stumbling through a nightmarish reality show where we could be voted out of the plot at any moment.

Or is this reality? In our bleary-eyed exhaustion, it's easy to miss the countless impossible ways in which people find themselves compelled to fight back, to create, to imagine other worlds. The echoes of the 60s are subtler, more fragmentary and uneven, but they're everywhere. It is one of the tasks of the next new left to amplify these echoes, to fan the flames of resistance, to bring the memory of past explosions to bear on the sparks of the present. This is a difficult task, no doubt about it. But it's the only kind of task that can allow us to take hold of our humanity and recover that sense of power and possibility that turned anger into action in the 60s. ★

new ★ SOCIALIST

Issue #64 2008-2

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NEW SOCIALIST offers radical analysis of politics, social movements and culture in the Canadian state and internationally. Our magazine is a forum for people who want to strengthen today's activism and for those who wish to replace global capitalism with a genuinely democratic socialism. We believe that the liberation of the working class and oppressed peoples can be won only through their own struggles. For more information about the publisher of this magazine, the New Socialist Group, please see the inside back cover.

New Socialist is a member of the CMPA.
Printed at JT Printing, a union shop.

SPECIAL ISSUE ON REMEMBERING AND LESSONS OF 1968

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THE DYNAMICS OF GLOBAL REVOLT

On the past and future of 1968

BY DAVID MCNALLY

LET US START WITH ONE EVENT FROM 1968 THAT should help to dispel some misconceptions. The episode in question is the overthrow of a US-backed dictator as the result of a heroic uprising of students and workers in Pakistan.

It all begins during the first week of November with a police attack on a small group of students returning from a shopping trip. As so often happens when a society is seething with resentment against authoritarianism, one seemingly innocuous event becomes a symbol of all the rot, corruption and oppression of everyday life.

The next day 3,000 angry students rally in a General Assembly. They denounce Field Marshall Ayub Khan, the head of the country's military dictatorship, and take to the streets. There they are met by police armed with tear gas, guns and batons. In the ensuing confrontation one student from a poor family, Abdul Hamid, is shot and killed. As news of the killing spreads, anger erupts, particularly in the poorest quarters of Rawalpindi, the country's military capital.

The next day, tens of thousands of students swell the streets, chanting "Death to Ayub Khan!" As news of the protest travels, they are joined by thousands from the poorest quarters of the city. The student protest has awakened opposition across broad layers of society. Soon virtually the entire working class and sections of the middle class, particularly lawyers, doctors and architects, have joined the movement. The students having lit the spark, the workers take over, raising high the torch of rebellion.

The scope of the working-class revolt is described by Tariq Ali and Susan Watkins: "The railway workers stop the trains. Factory workers cripple industry. Bus drivers and rickshaw-scooter drivers paralyse city transport. Prostitutes refuse to service police officers and army officers, and lawyers in their black robes march in dignified processions to endorse the student demands for democracy. The people have lost their fear."

And with that, a point of no return is reached. Although the struggle will ebb and flow for many months, the days of the hated regime are numbered. In March, Ayub Khan's dictatorship is toppled.

I begin with this event because of its power to debunk the liberal version of 1968 as a Western youth revolt for more lifestyle choices within capitalism. In the liberal account, 1968 was simply one year in a decade devoted to loosening up the repressive attitudes towards culture, sexuality and the family that had predominated throughout the 1950s. Conveniently, militant opposition to capitalism and imperialism disappear in this account.

To be sure, radical cultural politics were a significant part of the multi-faceted global revolt of 1968. But they were interconnected with mass struggles against racism and war, with workers' revolts against alienated labour in capitalist society, and with revolutionary movements to change the world. That's why the most important movements around gender and sexual oppression defined themselves as liberation movements (women's liberation, gay liberation, and so on). Their members fought not simply for increased rights within capitalist societies; instead they sought to liberate the downtrodden from all forms of capitalist oppression.

David McNally is the author of Another World is Possible: Globalization and Anti-Capitalism, *and a frequent contributor to* New Socialist.

And that is the secret to understanding 1968. Like a handful of other years in modern history – 1848, 1919 and 1936 are prime examples – 1968 was a year of global revolt in which the hope for a radically new form of society, a liberated society, moved masses of people into action.

"One, Two, Many Vietnams"

Contrary to another myth, 1968 did not originate among youth and students in the Global North. The roots of 1968 lay in the South, most notably in the courageous struggle of the Vietnamese people against US war and occupation.

In many respects, 1968 began with the extraordinary Tet (or New Year's) Offensive of Vietnam's National Liberation Front (NLF) in late January. Along a 600 mile front, the NLF swept into the US-controlled southern part of the country, capturing air fields, army bases, prisons, radio stations and government offices. Whole towns fell to the NLF and – the ultimate finger in the eye of empire – its guerrillas seized the US Embassy in Saigon. For an hour the Stars and Stripes were replaced by the colours of the NLF.

The Tet Offensive electrified millions. For the first time in post-war memory, the American war machine no longer looked invincible. Slowly but surely, a Third World peasant army was inflicting a humiliating defeat on half a million US troops using high-tech weaponry in a campaign of unrelenting destruction. After Tet no intelligent person believed the US could win the war. For opponents of the American empire, the late Che Guevara's exhortation that revolutionaries the world over should endeavour to create "One, two, many Vietnams" sounded a note of inspiration. Millions of people imagined that imperialism might truly be defeated world-wide.

From Anti-Colonialism to Anti-Capitalism

Opposition to the war in Vietnam was the great unifying cause of all the radical movements of the 1960s. For those in the "advanced" capitalist countries, it provoked enormous soul-searching about the very nature of these societies and the racism, war and colonialism that they breed. Such issues formed the backdrop to the greatest workers' revolt of 1968: the millions-strong general strike and wave of factory occupations that swept France in May of that year.

Few commentators have appreciated how much the spirit of 1968 in France was nurtured in struggles against French colonialism in Algeria. As Kristin Ross documents in her marvellous study, "May 68 and its Afterlives," the radical left of the 1960s was formed in street demonstrations against ultra-rightist groups defending France's war against the Algerian national liberation movement. In the face of brutal police repression and rightist violence, small leftist groups (but not the large Communist and Socialist parties) held up the banner of opposition to colonialism, occupation and war. They declared their solidarity with the Algerian people and developed a scathing critique of the racism and colonialism that permeated French society.

Contrary to another myth, 1968 did not originate among youth and students in the Global North. The roots of 1968 lay in the South, most notably in the courageous struggle of the Vietnamese people against US war and occupation.

These sentiments carried over into the movement against the Vietnam War. But more than this, they prompted thousands of younger leftists to question the inherently racist and colonialist nature of capitalist society. By the mid-1960s, growing numbers of young people in France were exploring radical and socialist critiques of capitalism. As a general rule, they were not attracted to the Communist Party which was bureaucratic, loyal to the rulers of the USSR and, among other things, refused to support the struggle for Algerian independence. Instead, a variety of more militant and innovative socialist currents became points of reference for many French youth.

Radical ideas of direct democracy and workers' self-management flourished among these leftist currents. And such ideas played a central role when student protests against the Vietnam War and police repression triggered a mass workers' revolt in May.

The French Explosion

As in Pakistan, the upheaval in France begins with university students. In response to protests throughout March and April, many of them against the war in Vietnam, the administration at Nanterre University, in the northern outskirts of Paris, shuts down the campus. Undaunted, the students reply by occupying a lecture theatre.

On Friday, May 3, the Nanterre students appeal for support from their compatriots at the Sorbonne, the historic university in central Paris. When students begin to rally at the Sorbonne, they are greeted by baton-wielding riot police who proceed to inflict beatings and arrests. But the authorities have misjudged the mood. Students throw up barricades and begin fighting back. Now the authorities close the Sorbonne and flood the area with police. But the battle is merely on pause. Throughout the weekend, students plan new actions.

Three days later, 30,000 demonstrators converge in central Paris. They demand a withdrawal of police from the Sorbonne and the release of all arrested students. The government refuses to budge. More demonstrators take to the streets the next day, and even more the day after that. Students

then begin to issue radio broadcasts from the streets and the movement swells ever larger, with considerable numbers of young workers joining the protests.

Then, on Friday, May 10 – "the night of the barricades" – the whole balance of forces shifts. The government announces that it is prepared to withdraw the police and reopen the Sorbonne. But this is not enough for the increasingly mobilized and emboldened students; they want their arrested comrades released as well. Protesters now decide to occupy the Latin Quarter, a historic section of central Paris. Cobblestone, wood, cars, scrap metal are all gathered in order to erect barricades. The demonstrators hold the Latin Quarter past midnight. Stones are stockpiled in case the police attack. And attack they do in the early hours of the morning.

The brutality of the police assault will shock millions. Using tear gas and batons, the cops repeatedly attack, cracking skulls as they go about their dirty business. Some barricades fall, but at many the police are repulsed. The confidence and determination of the young demonstrators grow. They become more daring and defiant.

One participant recounts: "The general feeling is of a trance. We feel liberated. Suddenly, we have turned into human beings and we are shouting:

"WE EXIST, WE ARE HERE.

"One boy, in an incredibly heroic gesture, grabs a red flag and leads us towards the cops, through the gas and grenades. To our utter surprise we outnumber the enemy and they retreat. Crowds behind us cheer wildly."

By the early hours of the morning, the police have reconquered the Latin Quarter. But in truth, they have lost. As hospitals overflow with the wounded and jails with the arrested, millions of people are outraged by the images of police brutality. And the students, despite beatings and arrests, are fired with energy and enthusiasm. Having held off the police for hours, they believe in their own power.

The next day, a Saturday, the unions, under immense pressure to do something in response, agree to call a general strike and mass demonstration for Monday, May 13. To everyone's astonishment, a million people turn up and reclaim the city. News arrives that the police have vacated the Sorbonne. "Everybody to the Sorbonne," the crowd cries.

Tens of thousands occupy every conceivable building at the university. For the next five weeks, the university is the centre of revolutionary activity. Lectures, debates, organizing meetings go on around the clock. Every night a general assembly, open to all, is convened in the Grand Amphitheatre and a new occupation committee of 15 is elected. The protesters are engaged in direct democracy and no bureaucracy will be tolerated.

The next day young workers, who had marched with the students the day before, occupy the Sud-Aviation aircraft factory. Workers across the country follow their example. In many cities and towns the worker uprising is even more militant than in Paris.

The struggle against authoritarianism in the streets has now been joined by an upheaval against authoritarian rule in the workplace. Hundreds of factories are occupied – more than one million workers now preside over their places of work. Ali and Watkins describe the situation: "Ten million workers are on strike: factories, shipyards, oil refineries, railways, offices, banks, department stores, post offices, administrative buildings, schools and colleges have all ground to a halt. … The airports are shut and there are no trains, buses or Metro. No rubbish is being collected."

Painters, actors, architects and doctors join the uprising. The Cannes Film Festival is cancelled when technicians join the general strike. The spirit of the Paris Commune of 1871, when workers ruled the city for three months, is now regularly invoked. Talk of revolution is everywhere.

May 1968 has debunked the idea that revolutionary working-class upheavals are impossible in conditions of advanced capitalism. But the movement cannot escape the suffocating weight of the parties of labour reform, particularly the Communists, who want to end the movement before it escapes their control. Through deceit and small retreats followed by bigger ones, the Communists demobilize the movement. Workers win some improvements in wages and working conditions, but the opportunity has been squandered.

Voices of 68

We footballers belonging to various clubs in the Paris region have today decided to occupy the headquarters of the French Football Federation. Just like the workers are occupying their factories, and the students occupying their faculties. Why?

In order to give back to the 600,000 French footballers and to their thousands of friends what belongs to them: football. Which the pontiffs of the federation have expropriated from them in order to serve their egotistical interests as sports profiteers.

From the Footballers' Action Committee statement "Football to the Footballers!" (1968)

France 1968: workers demonstrate during the massive uprising that saw 10 million workers on strike at its peak.

Still, May 68 shatters one myth after another about the realities of late capitalism. Forty years later, its images continue to inspire hope and resistance. And both of those sentiments are captured in the slogan chanted by tens of thousands as they marched on June 1, when it was clear that the movement was receding: "Ce n'est qu'un debut . . . Continuons… le combat" ("It's only the beginning. Continue the struggle.").

How History Moves

The events of 1968 are a crucial reminder of how years of patient slogging by radicals can lay the ground for much bigger upheavals. In France, it was solidarity with the Algerian struggle that provided the focus for a new left to emerge. But no one knew it at the time. Activists simply stood up for what they felt was right – opposition to racism and colonialism – often against considerable odds. Having identified a key issue that encapsulated so much of what was wrong with French society, they created the space for new radical critiques of Western capitalism.

In a similar vein, the US activists who mobilized in the early 1960s to fight for civil rights for African Americans could not have known that they were the pioneers of the most important left-wing upsurge in America since the 1930s. But in attacking racism in the US, in using direct action tactics, and in questioning the facade of US democracy, they laid the groundwork for the free speech and anti-war movements that would come a few years later, and for the New Left movement that would bring socialist ideas to the biggest audience in a generation.

Of course, not all patient slogging by leftists leads to a mass radicalization in a matter of a few years. But in times of war, occupation, and simmering discontent about the conditions of everyday life, such tectonic shifts in political life are possible. And a key task of the radical left is to nurture those possibilities, to keep alive the spirit of hope, by assisting resistance struggles and developing socialist resources that fit the times.

New Socialisms

It is significant in this regard that 1968 was the harbinger of new socialisms. At their best – and they were too often far from their best – this involved socialist perspectives that made anti-racism and anti-imperialism integral to their theory and practice, while also advancing anti-bureaucratic visions of socialist democracy and worker-controlled production. As women's and lesbian and gay liberation movements emerged, some left organizations also tried authentically to make the emancipatory visions and aspirations of these movements central to new socialisms.

For a variety of complex reasons, many of the freshest developments of the New Left were not long-lasting. As the ruling class regrouped, old orthodoxies re-emerged, often aided by frustrated responses to more difficult conditions.

But for a decade or so – roughly 1964 to 1974 – new left-wing movements that would play truly significant roles in 1968 did develop important resources of theory and practice. These pointed towards a left that could speak to the future, not just repeat slogans from the past. Learning from that experience 40 years later is a key challenge for the radical left today. To be sure, all previous years of global revolt deserve study – 1848, 1919, 1936. But 1968 remains the year of global revolt closest to our own times.

And as parts of the global South today – like Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine – experience war and occupation, while others – like Bolivia and Venezuela – nurture new mass movements of resistance, we need to recall how similar moments have led to great fissures in capitalist society.

Today, we need to continue to find ways of thinking and acting that highlight all that is wrong with world capitalism while underlining the need for real, radical alternatives. Seeking to learn from 1968, when resistance in the South sparked rebellion in the North, is one important part of that project. ★

A World in Motion

1968 saw the start to a truly incredible decade.

Early that year, **The Tet Offensive** signalled new possibilities, as the **National Liberation Front of Vietnam** dealt the forces of the US empire a serious blow.

In April, **African-American communities** exploded in rage after **Martin Luther King Jr.** was assassinated in Memphis, where he was supporting a strike by sanitation workers. **Student militancy** in the US reached new heights, with extended occupations at Columbia and a number of other universities.

In May, **French students** fought back against police and sparked a **general strike** that ground the country to a halt. A **student strike in Senegal** that same month was supported by a one-day **general strike** backed by the unions. In **Spain,** students and workers organized in new ways, offering the fascist Franco dictatorship its most serious opposition since the defeat of the Spanish Republic in 1939.

The **bureaucratic regimes in Eastern Europe** that called themselves "socialist" also faced **mass mobilizations**. Students protested in **Poland** and fought back against police in **Yugoslavia**. The greatest of these protests was in **Czechoslovakia**, after an invasion by Soviet bloc troops overthrew a liberalizing regime.

Brazilian students were arrested after smashing in the US embassy to protest against the war in Vietnam. **British protesters** broke through police lines outside the US embassy in London's Grosvenor Square. In **Tokyo** over 1,300 students charged into a US military hospital compound. Radical students occupied San Luis Gonzaga University in **Lima, Peru** and burned admission exam records. A march of 2000 in **Panama** protesting the arrest of opposition leaders turned into a riot.

Hundreds of **Mexican students** were killed when troops fired on a demonstration of 5,000 in the lead-up to the Olympics in Mexico City. This sparked a prolonged strike by over 170,000 high school and university students that shut down many institutions. At those Olympics, **African-American athletes** Tommy Smith and John Carlos made a dramatic statement by raising their fists in a **Black Power salute** on the medals podium.

Canada and **Quebec** were not untouched. Quebec saw the highest level of mobilization as the struggle for national liberation galvanized a wide range of movements. Perhaps the highpoint of **pan-Canadian labour activism** in 1968 was the **three week strike by postal workers**. In October 1968 **Quebec's CSN union federation** adopted the "Second Front" document that called for a wide-ranging struggle that combined the mobilization of organized workers with that of the poor, the unorganized, the unemployed, tenants and consumers.

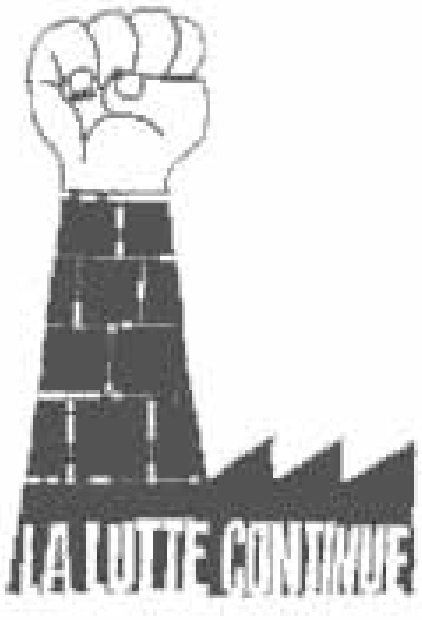
Student power was a theme in protests at universities and high schools. The struggle for student power in 1968 included occupations at the **University of Ottawa** and **McGill** to demand student representation in decision-making bodies, and mass mobilizations that led to the resignation of the president of **Simon Fraser.** Students occupied the **Ontario College of Art** for eight days to win the reinstatement of two fired instructors. In November and December, students from **Waterloo** and **Toronto** conducted militant solidarity pickets in support of **striking Peterborough newspaper workers**, leading to a number of arrests.

Several thousand students **shut down Newfoundland Catholic schools** for three days to protest overcrowding. High school students joined striking **Moncton** university students in a march through the streets to demand equity for Acadian francophones including full access to French language services and education.

Student activism was important, but was only one of many mobilizations. The first **women's liberation groups** and the **Front de Libération des Femmes in Quebec** were in formation and the women's movement was about to take off. The **University of Toronto Homophile Association** was formed the next year, launching the **lesbian/gay liberation movement** in Canada. The **indigenous Red Power movement** was beginning to take shape.

Anti-poverty activists mobilized against the inadequacy of social assistance, the lack of affordable housing, the limited educational opportunities for poor children and the bullying bureaucracy of the welfare state.

In urban centres, people organized to challenge the unfettered control of property developers over the shape of cities, the construction of expressways, the mindless demolition of older working-class neighbourhoods in the name of "slum clearance," and the destruction of heritage sites. A **new environmental movement** was beginning to take shape as people asked radical questions about the exploitation of nature. ★



The Earth Moved

1968 and the rise of a New Left

by Alan Sears

In 1968, the earth moved. For a moment, revolution seemed possible. Millions marched, occupied, fought back, went on strike. People experimented with new ways of living and sought out new ways of knowing the world. The excluded, those who had been most exploited and oppressed, mobilized in new ways.

In normal times, it is extremely difficult to imagine any really bold departures from the way things currently work. The world we know acts like a set of blinkers, framing our field of vision and dramatically narrowing our sense of what is possible. This does not necessarily mean people are fooled, that they fail to see injustice or that they like the way things are. But they lead their lives as if things will not change very much.

At times of global revolt, when the earth moves, radical change in all areas of life suddenly seems possible. The blinkers fall off and the horizons of possibility expand dramatically. You see differently and you feel it in your guts, as if you were thrown into the trunk of a car and driven to a mountain lookout and then suddenly released to see, smell, hear, taste and feel the incredible and terrifying beauty.

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At its peak, the anti-war movement mobilized hundreds of thousands to take action to protest American actions and shut down the war effort.

In 1968, millions shared in that sensation of release as a result of militant mass struggles that forced the world open. These struggles often combined mass mobilization with militant tactics designed to force changes, such as strikes, sit-ins, occupations and confrontations with police who tried to keep protesters from their targets. As people mobilized, they also developed a new and more vibrant sense of democracy that challenged the narrow constraints of the parliamentary system and the capitalist state.

Alan Sears is an editor of New Socialist.

The Struggles of 1968

The mobilizations of 1968 tended to focus around certain key themes. Opposition to US imperialism in Vietnam was crucial, inspiring solidarity and many other national liberation struggles, such as those against Portuguese colonialism, apartheid in South Africa, and the subordination of aboriginal people in Canada, the US, New Zealand and Australia. Women, people of colour, lesbians and gays and others excluded from full citizenship fought for it, demanding a range of democratic rights, protection from legal discrimination and certain social rights including anti-poverty measures.

People struggled against bureaucracy and authoritarianism and demanded real, participatory democracy as opposed to the limited representation offered by parliamentary systems. Finally, people fought for control over their bodies, their minds and their lives, challenging mind-numbing bureaucratic educational systems, sexual repression, the lack of reproductive freedom and (over time) male dominance and heterosexism.

Finally, 1968 was distinguished by a specific kind of militancy. Mobilizations sought to effect change rather than send a moral signal to those in power. Students and workers occupied factories, schools and universities. Crowds confronted police and sought to engage with their targets, for example attempting to shut down the operations of US imperialism in embassies, consulates and military facilities. Italian workers and students invented the active strike with mobilizations that began inside workplaces or schools, then marched through the facility and shut it down section by section. Of course, one cannot simply conjure up this kind of militancy by orienting towards greater confrontation – it is produced by the interaction between spreading radicalism and increased experimentation with forms of direct action.

The level of struggle in 1968 was high enough that the daily newspapers were filled with coverage of protest. Toronto's middle-of-the-road newspeper, *The Globe and Mail,* commented in an editorial on June 4: "It does not really matter where the unrest started, only where it will end. That, it now appears, may be anywhere or everywhere. For the uneasiness is European, maybe world wide. And in that fact, no one can take much hope unless he hopes to channel unrest from anarchy to deep reform."

1968: The View From Here

There are two main reasons why 1968 is worthy of our attention 40 years later.

First, it reminds us of what a moment of global revolt actually feels like, how the experience penetrates everyday life and alters the sense of expectations. It is actually very difficult to imagine such a moment of radicalism at the present time when movements are at a fairly low ebb.

Secondly, 1968 was a key moment in the rise of a new left, offering us models, both positive and negative, of how radicalism can be transformed to offer new tools in changed circumstances. In 2008, we face a huge challenge of renewing and transforming a marginalized left. There is much we can learn from the incomplete project of launching a new left in the period around 1968.

Voices of 68

Internationalist and egalitarian, spontaneous and libertarian, the May Movement suddenly recalled what socialism once stood for and showed what it could mean again in our times.

Daniel Singer on the events of May 68 in France (1970)

There is a temptation to nostalgia in telling the story of 1968, drawing a warm, rose-coloured portrait of hope and militancy. It is important not to idealize this moment, or to imagine that in some sense we can return to it. The next radical upturn will not repeat the experiences of 1968, nor will the next new left retrace the steps of the last one.

At the same time, wiping out the memory of 1968 in an act of radical amnesia will not serve the next new left. There are many radicals today who see the challenge of launching the next new left as one of starting over essentially from scratch, setting aside the experiences of previous radicalizations and the revolutionary theories derived from those experiences.

In the 40 years since 1968, the raw experience of the period has been made safe by being processed into various packages, both by the left and by the right. Of course, we necessarily interpret the past in light of our present circumstances and projects. But when examining the story of this moment, it is important not to push it so hard into a particular analytical framework that we lose the raw power of a time when revolution was in the air, when the blinkers came off and the horizons of human possibility seemed vast. It is important to expect to be surprised in some way from the experience of global revolt.

Of course, the great issue that hangs over us in 2008 as we look back on this period of insurgency is how might it happen again, and how can we contribute to putting mass radicalism back on the agenda. The story of 1968 is not very relevant if it is simply about a glorious moment in the past. It offers inspiration and resources for the next new left, provided that we are open-ended enough to learn from it and that we make good use of the theoretical tools that marxism offers us to understand processes of radicalization.

The Left: Old and New

The mass radicalization that took place in 1968 contributed to the development of a new left, one that sought new approaches to address a changing world. I am using the term "new left" broadly here, to cover a wide range of political practices sharing a common assumption that the world had changed in important ways since the last wave of radicalization, that the tools of the old left were no longer sufficient, and that it was necessary to develop a new left to move from protest to changing the world.

The development of a new left included theoretical work to address emerging issues, innovations in the expression of radicalism through language, culture and political imagery, new forms of mobilization and organization, and a renewal of internationalism and solidarity. The project of forming a new left was left incomplete during this wave of radicalization, for reasons I will explore below.

A new left was necessary because the world had changed

substantially since the formation of the old left, which emerged out of the revolutionary wave of 1917-27 which included the influential Russian Revolution. By the 1960s, the old left was oriented primarily around Communist Parties (defined politically by their support for the USSR) and social democratic parties like the NDP in Canada (focused on reform through parliamentary means). The old left had consolidated through the mass radicalization of the 1930s and 1940 that began during the hardships of the Depression and ultimately won basic collective bargaining and welfare rights for important sections of the working class in the most industrialized countries.

The important victories won in the 1940s began to change the world in significant ways. The working class became less political after winning full citizenship for key sections of workers, including important social and human rights and legal collective bargaining. In winning full citizenship, workers fought their way into the market, winning increases in job security and living standards that began to transform the way of life for many, for example, providing new access to suburban home ownership, cars, and televisions. The new buying power of portions of the working class also fuelled the growth of service industries (such as retail and hospitality), contributing to a shift in employment patterns.

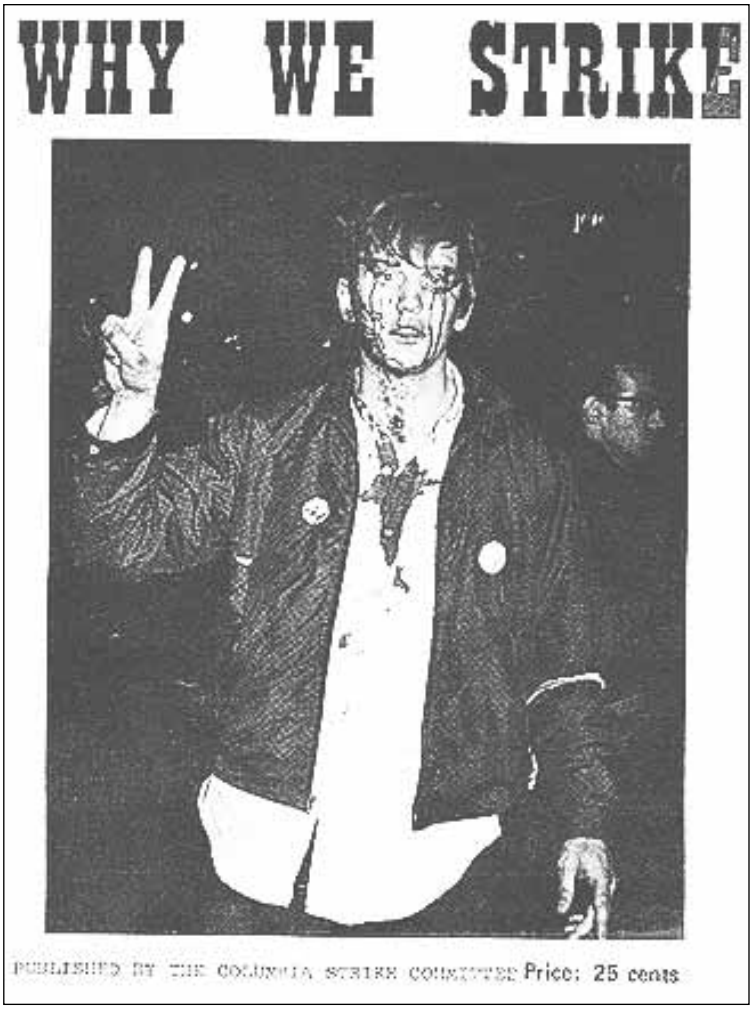
Employers and the state responded to the radicalization of the 1930s and 1940s through both granting concessions and launching a counter-offensive. McCarthyism, the name given to organized anti-communism in the US, was used to shut down dissent within the political system, the unions and the educational system. Corporations began to restructure in order to weaken workers' power on the shop floor, introducing new labour processes and shifting production from traditional working-class communities to new locations (for example, the move of Ford from Windsor to Oakville, Ontario in 1954).

The old left did not have the resources to make sense of these important changes in the organization of work and in working-class ways of life, rooted as it was in particular sections of the working class who had made important gains in this period. Further, the old left accommodated itself to the cold war world, basically choosing to ally with one superpower or the other (the Communist Parties tending to opt for the USSR and the social democrats for the US).

The New Left: Rise of the Excluded

Those who did not win full citizenship in the radicalization of the 1930s and 1940s, and those who had no place in the two-superpower world, were to play a key role in the political surge around 1968.

Women faced barriers to participation in public life, education and employment (including legal discrimination in the form of differential pay), lacked access to reproductive freedom and child care, and received a lower level of support through the welfare state system. People of colour faced overt legal discrimination, including a colour bar in Canadian immigration law, as well as a host of barriers grounded in everyday racism. The Quebecois had no right to national self-determination. Francophone Quebecois along with francophones outside Quebec faced discrimination in employment and lacked access to full language and educational rights. First Nations people faced a colonial administration that deprived them of aboriginal rights, offering instead ongoing brutalization through the education, legal and social service systems.



Pamphlet from student occupation at Columbia University, NYC.

Young people were completely subordinated to their parents or to institutions such as schools and universities that took on full parental powers. Public sector workers did not win full union rights in the 1940s and played a key role in activist mobilizations around 1968. Young workers unwilling to accept the authoritarian workplace and the everyday threats to body and mind in labour processes played an important role in

galvanizing worker activism in locations where union rights had already been secured. Lesbians and gays faced invisibility, discrimination and abuse (In 1968 Canada was just moving to decriminalize gay sex.).

Finally, on a global scale the Third World emerged as a challenge to the cold war dominance of two superpowers. The rise of the Third World framed the struggles of 1968. The battle for national liberation in Algeria in the face of bitter French repression, the Cuban revolution and the Vietnamese struggle provided key reference points, demonstrating both the obscenity of imperialism and the possibility of defeating it. The rise of the Third World challenged the global racism of an imperialist system grounded in whiteness and eurocentrism. Activists understood the integral links between the African-American freedom struggle and the liberation struggles of the Third World. By 1968, it was also clear that decolonization was necessary but not sufficient for liberation and that global capitalism needed to be defeated for genuine freedom in the Third World and globally.

The old left lacked the resources to fully make sense of these emerging struggles of the excluded. It was trying to navigate the changing world using charts drawn up in 1917. This is not to say that it had absolutely nothing to offer. There has certainly been some deliberate forgetting of the important if partial contributions of the old left around building cultures of solidarity with elements of anti-imperialism, anti-racism and gender equity. Key activists in struggles against imperialism, racism and male dominance had often been drawn to the promise of universal emancipation that the old left offered, but they often turned away from that old left when it failed to keep its own promises in these struggles.

New Politics: Achievements and Limitations

The new left of 1968 arose in response to the exhaustion of the old left and to the need for a conscious left to help move from resistance to transformation. Many activists drew the conclusion from their own experience that it was not enough to mobilize. There was also a need for spaces to discuss, plan and analyze. It was not enough to challenge the system. The system itself needed to be named and examined if it was going to be overthrown and replaced by something better.

Voices of 68

Bloor-Bathurst, young Maoist couple needs radical couple to share house; must be political; approx. $125 mo., walking distance to most demonstrations.

Classified ad from AMEX – American Exile in Canada Vol. I (12)

The new left, in its various forms, was committed to understanding what was new in 1968 and also what was not. It unlocked a voracious hunger for history and theory, as activists sought resources to make sense of a world in motion. Mass activism is exhilarating but it is also daunting. The stakes are high and people become engaged in new ways in the activity of making sense of the world and building an infrastructure of dissent that will support and sustain mobilization.

In reality, there was not a single new left around 1968, but a variety of organizations with a wide range of political orientations. The story of the new left, which I cannot present here in any depth, is neither simple nor pretty. Interesting experiments developed, many of which were consumed by the flames of dogmatism and sectarianism. The Students for a Democratic Society in the US is perhaps the largest single example of an attempt to develop an open-ended militant space that touched the lives of tens of thousands before collapsing into ugly and narrowly dogmatic sectarian squabbles.

Further, the new left fell far short of its own promise in the areas of inclusiveness and solidarity. Black Power, feminism, Red Power and other militant movements tended to develop as breaks with the new left as well as the old. It was specifically, for example, women's experiences of marginalization within the new left that led to the early forms of second wave feminism.

In the end, the new left also failed to produce a sufficiently unorthodox marxism. There were promising beginnings but these tended to lead to either a renewed dogmatism (usually within either a Trotskyist or a Maoist framework) or a rejection of marxism with the loss of its vital resources for making sense of the changing world.

A genuinely unorthodox marxism would critically use powerful tools of historical materialism while at the same time engaging with the theories of liberation emerging out of various movements. It would be grounded in an expansive analysis of class in which social class is always seen as gendered, sexualized and racialized. Finally, it would be genuinely open to new issues and new forms of expression, for example, embracing environmentalist and ecological concerns about the health of the planet and becoming self-critical about the ways that socialist traditions have tended to absorb a capitalist worship of ever-increasing production.

An unorthodox marxism might have contributed to the development of a more nuanced and complex understanding of revolution. While millions of people in 1968 accepted the idea that change was not possible within the existing system, there was not a lot of clarity about what a revolution might entail. On the one hand, many orthodox marxists understood revolution in terms of models generated in Russia in 1917, China in 1949 or Cuba in 1959, without devoting a great

Memories of 1968 are now used to sell products. Fashion brand McQ uses pictures of streetfighting from Paris in May 1968 by Bruno Barbey as an advertisement.

deal of thought to what model might suit, say, Canada in 1968. Meanwhile, the non-marxist left was often extremely vague or very conspiratorial about the actual character of a revolutionary process. Many marxists and non-marxists shared the shattering experience of having revolutionary hopes dashed when confronted with the robustness of the system without generalizing back to a renewed sense of what revolution might mean.

Resources from the Last New Left

The 1968 new left does not then, in any simple sense, provide an answer to the challenge we currently face in developing the next new left. It does, however, provide some important resources to address problems of method, the way of going about building a new left. Let's look at five issues.

First, the last new left had important elements of open-endedness in its politics. The old left acted as if it had accumulated a storehouse of theory and practice that would allow it to navigate any circumstances within capitalist social relations. The new left expected to be surprised some of the time and sought to understand how changes in the world and in radical movement shifted the political ground. This contributed to important developments in thinking about changes in work organization, the nature of community, political systems, cultural expressions and interpersonal relations.

These investigations went along with new political practices and forms of expression, challenging an old left iconography that often seemed attached to a different time and place. That did not mean tossing out everything or dropping principles, but always being open to assessing the fit between what was known and what was still to be discovered.

Second, for the best of new left practice this open-endedness did not mean casually dismissing the past. Instead, the past of the women's movement, anti-racist and anti-imperialist struggles, labour activism, sexuality and socialist movements was mined for resources, often brought back to life by challenging prevailing orthodoxies attached to texts and events.

Third, the new left engaged in the construction of a new infrastructure of dissent, to sustain activism by developing the collective capacities for analysis, expression and action.

The old left had thrived in the context of a particular political habitat, including particular working-class ways of life, forms of work, community organizations, and formal or informal networks. Many of these no longer existed by 1968 or were hanging on by a thread dangling back to the 1940s: the tavern at the factory gates, the working-class community right beside the mine or factory, the radical press and pub-

lishing houses, bookstores, left-wing cultural organizations associated with particular immigrant communities (in Canada, they included Finnish, Ukrainian, Hungarian and Jewish organizations, among others), and the left oppositions within unions. Some of these were revived as part of the 1968 new left, while others were replaced by new infrastructure.

The older forms of dissent that had developed in the early 20th century grew in a context in which many working-class people had very limited access to formal education. Thus working-class self-education was a major element of the infrastructure of dissent, often weaving political education together with basic literacy, language, music or art education.

By 1968, a much higher proportion of working-class people had access to high school education and more were going on to universities and colleges. Therefore, a wide range of educational experiments took place within and around these institutions. Teach-ins and free universities were organised, often during occupations and student strikes. A new radical press grew rapidly around 1968, ranging from the party press of specific organizations to non-aligned political publications and a wide range of underground media. Many of these had a very different graphic and linguistic style than the media associated with the old left.

Commercialized popular culture played a larger part in the infrastructure of dissent in the 1960s than it had previously. Certainly, there had been music, visual art, writing and performance associated with the old left. But the later extension of record-buying, television, mass market paperbacks and other forms made popular culture a more important element of the new left.

The music of the period was certainly heavily influenced by the new left. Big rock concerts were political events and a lot of music had radical content. Psychedelic Jefferson Airplane sang "Look what's happening out in the streets/Got a revolution/Got to revolution." The Rolling Stones rocked out "Everywhere I hear the sound of marching, charging feet, boy/ cause summer's here and the time is right for fighting in the street, boy." The soon to be insipid Chicago had bold political lyrics: "They're ruining this world for you and me/The big heads of state won't let us be free." Marvin Gaye sang, "Picket lines and picket signs/Don't punish me with brutality." In this period of mobilizations, these musical events actually helped sustain political community, energizing people and bringing them together in new ways.

Fourth, the emerging new left provided ways of connecting political analysis, experiments in new ways of living and dreams for a better world. Bold and radical visions of revolution nurtured and were nurtured by millions of small-scale attempts to reconfigure personal, social and economic life. British socialist-feminist Sheila Rowbotham wrote in her memoirs of the period, "There are no easy answers to the question of how you live in a world you want to change radically." Radicals of the new left found ways to discuss and debate, to relate the utopian to the transformative, and to relate reforms in the present to revolutionary transformation.

Fifth and finally, it is important to understand that the new left of 1968 did not emerge spontaneously from nowhere. Small groups of radicals, thinking against the dominant currents of the old left, began in the 1950s to anticipate this new left, developing new practices of open-ended investigation as they participated in the building of small movements. In Italy, for example, a current loosely grouped together as the "workerists" began to look in great detail at how work was changing, at patterns of migration and cultural shift, processes of mobilization and the role of the dominant old left organization, the Communist Party. They learned from the new forms of workplace militancy that began to emerge in the 1960s. They were thus well situated in 1968 to provide resources to help large numbers of people make sense of the new mobilization, and to link together student and worker activism in important ways. Similar small radical groups did innovative work in Britain, France and the United States.

The Next New Left

John Lennon's song "#9 dream" begins "It was so long ago/was it in a dream/was it just a dream." Writing about 1968 feels a bit like inviting people to share in a dream, from a period when dreams were concretely connected to hopes and to actions. Capitalism works to reorient our dreams towards commodities, things we purchase on the market that seem to have mystical powers in conditions where our humanity and our labour are degraded. In conditions of mass radicalization, we learn to dream freely again, detaching our dreams from market goods and using them to allow us to see a better world.

But it is mere idle dreaming if we are left with nostalgic thoughts of the good old days, without any sense of what we might do now. I stress again, we are unlikely to see 1968 tomorrow. And the next radicalization will not reproduce 1968. Our job now is to build towards the next new left, not yet knowing what form it will finally take or precisely what will trigger the next wave of radicalization.

The 1968 new left offers us inspiration, a taste of what it actually feels like when the earth moves. It also provides important resources. Specifically, it is important to learn from the small groups of activists who began to anticipate the new left, seeking to understand the changing world around them and learning through building the movements, moving against the current in the period before the wave of radicalization hits. This requires that we balance open-endedness, preparation to be surprised by what is new, with a commitment to learning from the past. We can prepare ourselves for that moment when the earth moves for us, even if we cannot be sure when that might be. ★

Students in the Lead

The story of struggles on Canadian campuses yesterday and today

by Chris Webb

"The student is already a very bad joke."

From the Situationist pamphlet
On the Poverty of Student Life (1966)

Today, perhaps more than ever, students have become mere factors of production in the academic factories we call universities. Business schools are dominated by corporate branded degrees; the sciences are tied to the funding and research of giant chemical and agri-business firms; students cannot even go to the washroom without a Canadian soldier beckoning them to enlist in the fight against terror.

The university has become an essential productive tool in the pocket of modern capitalism, directly controlling the minds and futures of students, telling them their education is valued only in relation to its market value and their success, measured in terms of their eventual commodification and consumer power.

But the lack of democracy in the university is not a recent occurrence. Indeed, many of the struggles against privatization and authoritarian administrations began in the heady days of student revolt in 1968. In an article titled "Canadian Students: Revolt and Apathy" in a 1968 issue of *Canadian Dimension*, Danny Drache says "the university is used as one of the crucial instruments of social control, organized and especially equipped to get inside and shape the collective mind of the student body."

Student anger at undemocratic and hierarchical university administrations and the authority of so-called "objective" academic knowledge exploded in 1968 – a moment that holds immense cultural, social and political importance for the student movement of today. But like the student militants of 1968, students today must learn all they can from past struggles while not using them as a blueprint for the current student crisis. The spirit of 1968 was one of urgency, one that demanded fresh strategy and analysis instead of rigid political formulas.

1968 poster from Student Association to End the War in Vietnam

Revolt at Home and Abroad

The year before the outpourings of student revolt in Paris, Warsaw, London and Mexico City, McGill University in Montreal was the scene of large-scale confrontations between students and the administration. Civil disobedience, protests of thousands, sit-ins and police brutality shaped the McGill students before French students shouted, "Arise ye wretched of the university!"

The confrontation was sparked by the administration trying to expel three editors from the student paper, the *McGill*

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Daily, for publishing a satirical article portraying then-US president Lyndon Johnson performing necrophilia on assassinated previous president John F. Kennedy. The hysterics generated by the article resulted in three editors being charged before the Senate's discipline committee with "obscene libel."

But under the leadership of Students for a Democratic University (SDU) – who led a campaign to have the charges against the three dropped, accusing the university of illegitimately interfering in and censoring student affairs – thousands of students expressed their anger at the administration through direct action.

"Students have the right to: publish political satire, four letter words, define 'good taste' for themselves," the SDU wrote in their newsletter. The SDU successfully mobilized 1,000 students on the day the discipline committee met and disrupted the meeting with a sit-in of 22 students. When the committee refused to drop charges, the enraged students stormed the administration building and occupied all six floors. In the days following the occupation, radical student sentiment at McGill was expressed in numerous demonstrations, free universities and discussion of free speech on campus.

Internationally, 1968 was a monumental year for the student movement, with students occupying the Sorbonne in Paris and declaring it a people's university. These same students would later march with 10 million striking French workers who were demanding more than the measly reforms offered to them by their union leaders.

In Mexico City, 300 protesting students were gunned down and the country's largest university was occupied by the military. Students marched through the streets shouting "We don't want Olympic Games! We want revolution!" They demanded an end to the brutal and corrupt police force, the freeing of political prisoners and freedom of assembly laws. For this, many paid the ultimate price. This was also the summer of the infamous Black Power salute by two US athletes who were expressing their solidarity with the civil rights movement. They were cut from the olympic team for their actions.

No single factor caused this global outpouring of student dissent, but there were some crucial events and movements that encapsulated the student zeitgeist. The war in Vietnam forced people to pick a side: either the courageous Vietnamese or an imperialist superpower. This generated mass protest movements that called into question fundamental institutions of US rule, including the press, the courts and the university. The civil rights movement, the Cuban Revolution, the war in Algeria and national liberation struggles across the South galvanized many students into a bloc that firmly identified with revolutionary elements. However, there was no love for the USSR which invaded Czechoslovakia that spring, or other Communist parties that many saw as counterrevolutionary.

1968/2008

Despite the essential historical differences between this epoch and our own, students in Canada continue to face many of the same challenges. There is increasing emphasis on the market value of education, a series of wars involving imperialist powers and an environment hostile to student dissent and radical mobilization.

The essential questions remain the same as they did in 1968.

But we can also draw strength from the enormous gains made by the movement during the era of 1968. Many civil rights, feminist and national liberation movement as well as many workers' struggles received tremendous support on university campuses. Many of the gains made then are still felt today – freedom of assembly, freedom of speech and new space for student activism. These freedoms became essential to an environment of critical analysis on campus.

But many of these hard-fought-for campus reforms have been eroded over time. With administrators shutting down rallies at York University and arresting students protesting tuition hikes at the University of Toronto, it is apparent that many of the freedoms won in the 60s are under direct assault once again. With the neo-liberal restructuring of campuses, universities often come under the thumb of corporate investors who want good workers before radical activists.

While this model brings enormous funding to universities whose budgets have been cut by government, it also brings the subservience demanded by the market. This trend can only lead to increased authoritarianism on campus and an administration that demands student discipline – in and out of the classroom.

2008: The State of the Unions

Despite these factors, many student unions are hesitant to challenge university administrations, let alone engage in global solidarity with striking workers or bombed civilians.

In English Canada, the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) and the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) are the largest student bodies at the federal and provincial levels. The

Voices of 68

As long as students are prepared to fight the administration and not sit down and take it, they can have what they want, when they want it and how they want it.

Horace Campbell, York University student activist at a rally celebrating the successful conclusion of a student occupation at the Ontario College of Art.
Reported in The Globe and Mail*, March 2 1968*

CFS does run some important campaigns against rising tuition fees and the growing for-profit education industry. It promotes grants over loans. However important these may be, the organization draws the line at calling for lower fees. In this way it doesn't treat education as a social right that all are entitled to without charge.

In Manitoba, although CFS has been able to impose freezes on tuition fee increases, the direct mobilization of students around this issue was nonexistent last academic year, despite record turnouts at the previous year's demonstrations. The organization's primary goal is to represent students to government. This allows for little student participation. CFS has also refused to investigate the possibility of a boycott of Israel after Ryerson University student leaders attempted to engage the organization in dialogue about the human rights of Palestinians.

Unlike CFS, CASA does not hide behind a phony image of student power. The undemocratic nature of this organization is astounding. And much like CFS, their primary concern is lobbying the federal government for more grants, decreased student debt and accessibility. A CASA representative said that CASA's interests do not extend beyond the scope of the students it represents, particularly on controversial issues like war in Afghanistan.

The inspirational and vibrant Quebec student movement stands in contrast to the conservatism of the student organizations in English Canada. In 2005 the Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (ASSÉ) was successful in mobilizing nearly 200,000 students against the provincial Liberal plan to convert 103 million dollars of student grants into loans. The huge pressure exercised by the strike was able to win back at least a part of the amount cut from the loans and grants system.

But the striking students did not stop there. The ASSÉ called for an end to reforming the grants and loan programs, an end to the privatization of the CÉGEP (college) network, elimination of student debt and free access to education for all.

Hundreds of thousands of workers and students donned red fabric squares to represent their support for the striking students and their cause. Their example demonstrates the potential of student power in bringing about social change. Lobbyist student unions were swept aside by the urgency and anger of the students they claimed to represent.

Rochdale College opened in downtown Toronto in 1968 as a radical alternative campus. Now it's senior citizen housing with a big video game ad on its side.

Future for the Student Movement?

Students today are shackled with the chains of neoliberalism in and out of the classroom. Many hold parttime or fulltime jobs while juggling demanding course loads and families on the side. Add to this the mounting levels of student debt and decreasing public funding for post-secondary education, and little time or energy is left for student politics. This leads to general apathy among students and a serious misunderstanding of the role of student unions in creating lasting change outside the rigid parameters defined by the university administration.

While 1968 was a time when some students militantly opposed these hierarchical and undemocratic administrations, there were still those who passively accepted its authority. Unfortunately, the latter group is growing today not only among the general student populace, but within student organizations.

But the potential for renewed student militancy remains because of the very policies that the university continues to implement – rising costs of tuition, repression of dissent and increasing reliance on the private sector. Despite the remaining militant elements at many university campuses across Canada, it will not be the anti-imperialist or anarchist students who bring about fundamental change. Rather, as we saw in Quebec, change will come when the mass of students move into action.

In the meantime, it is essential that student unions and leaders provide a structural analysis of the university's role in bolstering capitalism. Their solutions need to move beyond just demanding lower tuition fees. The essential questions remain the same as they were in 1968: what role does the university play in society and how can its function be changed from academic production line to one that is critically engaged and democratic?

In answering these questions, a new wave of student leaders must look to 1968 and realize that changing the university is not enough. Only through alliances with workers, many of whom face the same economic pressures as students, can the revolutionary transformation of the university and society be accomplished.

In France, student grievances with the rigid university administration found sympathetic ears in the factories around Paris and sit-ins became strikes and workers' action committees. At the 1968 Canadian Union of Students congress, president Peter Warrian told students that "the central thrust of student power must be aimed at the internal and external democratization of education. … we do this knowing that democracy and liberation will not come through the manipulation of a few, but only through the struggle of all." ★

VIETNAM THEN, IRAQ NOW

Why so much difference in levels of antiwar mobilizing?

BY CHARLIE POST

Those of us who have organized against the US war and occupation of Iraq are faced with a major paradox. On the one hand, the war is extremely unpopular – most people in the US want their government to withdraw troops from Iraq sooner than later. On the other hand, the level of antiwar organization and mobilization is extremely low.

While some of the largest antiwar demonstrations in history marked the run-up to the war in the winter-spring of 2003, mobilizations since then have been progressively smaller. In September 2007, only 10,000-15,000 people turned out at a national demonstration in Washington, DC, while regional demonstrations that October were significantly smaller than most organizers expected – with fewer than 5,000 turning out in New York City, a centre of antiwar sentiment in the US.

How do we explain this paradox, especially when we compare the movement against the war/occupation of Iraq with the anti-Vietnam war movement of 40 years ago? Clearly, there are important similarities between 2008 and 1968. While both wars were very unpopular, a majority of US citizens did not come to support the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam until after 1970, just as most Americans do not support "US out of Iraq now" today. The movements against both wars were divided between different national coalitions, which differed in their relationship to liberal "antiwar" Democrats. Both movements experienced sharp ups and downs in the level of mobilizations, with presidential election years being low points and periods of US escalation being high points. Despite these similarities, it is clear that the level of organization and mobilization against the US war in Vietnam – even at its lowest ebbs – was significantly higher than against the US war and occupation of Iraq.

Differences in the US Military

Two key factors explain the differences in antiwar organization and struggle against the Vietnam and Iraq wars. The first is the level of US military presence and the status of the US armed forces. During Vietnam, the US fought with a conscript army. There were up to 500,000 GIs on the ground in Vietnam. Over 50,000 young men, disproportionately working class and people of color, lost their lives in Vietnam. The draft and US casualties fueled antiwar sentiment and activism in the late 1960s and early 1970s. While the draft targeted young people from the working class and communities of color, the threat of being forced to fight in a losing war most viewed as immoral and unjust produced sustained student activism against the war.

The high level of casualties – nearly every working class and Black or Latino neighborhood in the US experienced young men coming back in body bags nearly every month after 1967 – turned the majority of Americans against the war. The high likelihood of death and injury in a hopeless and pointless war sparked opposition among active duty GIs and veterans. After 1969, disgust with the war in the military made the US army in Vietnam an unreliable fighting force.

Today, the US military in Iraq has deployed, at most, 150,000 volunteer soldiers. Clearly, the growing number of injuries – tens of thousands of soldiers have returned from Iraq missing limbs and suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder – has fueled significant opposition to the war. The emergence of Military Families Speak Out (MFSO), Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) and antiwar organization among active duty military personnel early in the Iraq war and occupation is unprecedented. However, the size of the military force "on the ground" and the relatively low level of casualties is not sustaining the level of revulsion and resistance that existed during Vietnam. While the US military relies on an "economic draft," poverty and unemployment pushing young men and women into the armed forces, the absence of a draft leaves large sectors of working and middle class youth exempt from the possibilities of being sent to Iraq.

Climate for Activism

As the low level of casualties and the absence of a draft undercut mass organization and mobilization against the US war and occupation of Iraq, three decades of retreat and defeats in US labour and social movements undermines the emergence of a large "militant minority" that could sustain the antiwar movement in

Charlie Post is active in the faculty and staff union at the City University of New York, has helped organize anti-war activities in his union and neighbourhood, and is a member of Solidarity, a US socialist organization.

its low ebbs. The movement against the US war in Vietnam came in the wake of the victory of the African-American civil rights movement, which smashed the Jim Crow system of legal segregation and disenfranchisement in the US south. The black liberation movement continued, as urban insurrections, black workers' struggles and community organizations targeted institutionalized racism. The African-American struggle provided a powerful lived experience of how ordinary people, in the face of tremendous odds, could organize, fight and win, inspiring student and antiwar activism in the 1960s.

The ascending social movement promoted the development of a broad far left that maintained some independence from the Democratic Party and could be a counter-weight to demoralization and disorientation of the anti-Vietnam war movement during its low points. These forces made the antiwar movement a living reality during Vietnam between the semi-annual national and regional mobilizations – fighting the draft, organizing among GIs, veterans, and among people of colour.

Today, we are attempting to build a movement against the US war and occupation of Iraq in the midst of over 30 years of defeats. There are no existing social movements that can inspire a significant minority to believe in the power of mass organization and struggle from below. The absence of effective mass movements has resulted in the withering of the far left in the US (and internationally), deepening discouragement among many activists – and making the futile attempt to use the Democratic party to end the war more and more attractive.

The character of the popular opposition to US occupation inside Iraq – a reflection of the evolution of the global relationship of forces over the past three decades – also undermines the coherence of a "hard-core" of antiwar activists. In Vietnam, a popular-nationalist movement against imperialism inspired a generation of anti-imperialist student and youth radicals despite its Stalinist-bureaucratic leadership, and successfully stalemated US military forces on the ground after 1968. The divided, religious-sectarian resistance in Iraq, which targets both US forces and their Iraqi opponents, is incapable of inspiring an "anti-imperialist" minority or of militarily defeating the US occupation.

Building – or rebuilding – any social movement in the US during a presidential election year is always difficult. The "presidential" (versus parliamentary) system in the US increases the pressure that exists in all capitalist democracies to "vote realistically" for one or another "lesser evil." The main beneficiary of these pressures has been the pro-corporate, pro-imperialist Democratic Party.

CULTUROCITY.COM/

American troops joined demonstrations against the war and used direct action methods within the armed forces, ranging from refusing certain duties to attacking officers.

Rebuilding Movements

The pressure on social movement activists to pour all their energy into electing a Democrat is even greater this year with the nomination of Barak Obama. Most opponents of the war are attracted to Obama's antiwar rhetoric. They recognize that a major party's nomination of an African-American for president, and the realistic possibility of his election, is a tribute to the enduring impact of the civil rights and Black Power movements of the 50s and 60s. While a small minority of radicals and revolutionaries have pointed to Obama's pro-imperialist, pro-neoliberal politics, most activists are holding off on mobilizing against the war in order to elect Obama, and may be willing to "give him a chance to end the war" if he is elected.

Despite these obstacles, there remains a hard core of antiwar activists in the US. While most will hold their nose and vote for Obama, they have few illusions that a Democratic victory will end the US occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, or prevent an attack on Iran. They remain committed to fighting for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of US forces from the Middle East, no matter who occupies the White House or holds the majority in Congress. These activists are maintaining antiwar committees in their neighborhoods and union locals, continuing counter-recruitment activity and building MFSO, IVAW and the new antiwar GI coffeehouses. The success of the IVAW's Winter Soldier hearings this past spring (an event organized to publicize US atrocities and war crimes) was the most visible and important antiwar activity this year. The continued organization and activity of these militants will be central to the revival of the antiwar movement after the next presidential election. ★

VIETNAM THEN, AFGHANISTAN NOW

Antiwar organizing in Canada

BY GARY CRISTALL

The antiwar movement in the 60s in Canada can be said to have begun on Christmas Day of 1959 with a demonstration by the Combined Universities Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CUCND) in Ottawa. It was inspired, on the one hand, by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the UK and, on the other, by the federal government's quiet decision to import nuclear weapons from the US to be fitted onto Bomarc missiles based in Canada.

CUCND can be called the first manifestation of the "new left" in Canada – an amorphous term that was twice inaccurate. Many of the activists in CUCND and other organizations that would adopt the moniker were not "new" in the sense of being new to political activity. Many others could only with reservations be considered on the "left" if it is defined as a consciously socialist movement.

However, for a decade and more, the term was used to describe activists who had broken with the "old left" in the sense of the Stalinist Communist Party of Canada, Trotskyist and Maoist organizations.

Many of the activists who entered the political arena in opposition to nuclear weapons were new in every sense. They belonged to a new generation that would come to be called "boomers" – the product of the baby boom that followed the end of the second world war. They were more affluent than any generation before them, the result of the post-war economic boom. They were entering universities in unprecedented numbers. Their music, sexual behaviour and lifestyles are still with us as the "greying of the baby boom" fills the feature pages of newspapers.

Socialists raised radical slogans within the broad anti-Vietnam war movement they worked to build. Picture is from a 1960s publication of the antiwar movement in Canada.

While only a small percentage of this demographic bulge became politically active, they represented a significant number of new actors on the political scene – perhaps a few thousand at any one time. The CUCND, the New Democratic Youth (NDY), Liberal Religious Youth and, most of all, Student Union for Peace Action (SUPA) came to define the first years of the New Left.

Student Union for Peace Action

SUPA was probably the most far reaching and radical of these organizations. Founded in the fall of 1964 in Regina, it defined itself as the successor to CUCND. While its name implied it was a "peace" organization, in the summer of 1965 it took on a multiplicity of projects across Canada, from organizing among the black community in Nova Scotia to working with indigenous peoples in various areas to building links with BC's Doukhobors.

Mainly composed of university students, with some high school participation, SUPA turned campuses upside down and brought many students from middle class and well-off working class families into contact with the lowest rungs of Canadian society – the "wretched of the earth" to use the term from the socialist song "The Internationale." In many ways SUPA was a Canadian replication of Students for a Democratic Society in the US, combining new theories of community organizing with a revived radical socialist politics.

The contradictions between and within the various regional wings led to the demise of the group within a few years. Perhaps its greatest triumph was the mobilization at Montreal's Expo 67 on Hiroshima Day. SUPA celebrated this as Youth Day, denouncing everything from the war in Vietnam to the oppression of Canada's First Nations.

Gary Cristall is a Vancouver cultural worker. He attended CUCND rallies in the early sixties and joined the SUPA sit-in in front of the US consulate in Toronto in solidarity with the Selma, Alabama civil rights march in 1965. He has been a political activist ever since. He is a member of the New Socialist Group.

Then: Vietnam

Inspired by the Cuban Revolution, the victory of the Algerian revolution in 1962 and the general growth of what was called the "colonial revolution," including African-American resistance, hundreds of people, mainly students, became engaged in a frankly anti-imperialist campaign in support of the Vietnamese. A coherent pan-Canadian movement took shape that called for the withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam and an end to Canadian complicity in the war.

The latter was particularly aimed at the presence in Canada of Dow Chemicals, purveyors of napalm – perhaps the most obscene weapon used in Vietnam – and Hawker Siddeley, manufacturer of missile guidance systems. The arrival of large numbers of draft dodgers and deserters from the US was one factor that helped build the antiwar movement. So too did the new medium of TV, which brought images of the war to living rooms.

In the end it was the Vietnamese who won the war, but many Canadian activists felt at least a small part of their victory as their own. The movement served as a training ground for many who led later social and union struggles.

Much of the organization of the Vietnam movement was handled by the League for Socialist Action/Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière, and its youth wing, the Young Socialists/Jeunes Socialistes. The LSA was the Trotskyist organization that had successfully built itself from a few scattered branches into something fairly substantial through recruitment in the NDP and solid work in the Fair Play for Cuba Committees.

Perhaps the greatest strength of the Vietnam antiwar movement was its single issue focus. Anyone who supported its goals of US withdrawal and an end to Canadian complicity was welcome to join. LSA activists wanted to build as broad a movement as they could, while also recruiting more radical activists to their group. The fact that many of the key organizers had a broader agenda, and a more radical one, was sometimes hidden, sometimes not.

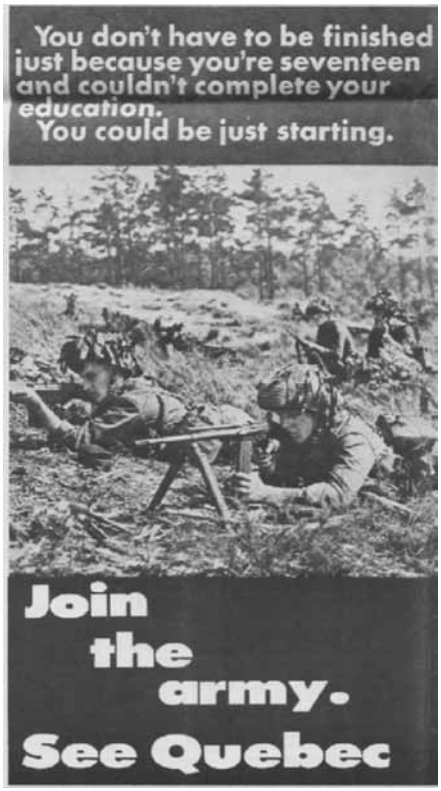
Che's call for "Two, Three, Many Vietnams" as the strategy for world revolution inspired some, while the vicious brutality of the war led others to get involved. There was a clear enemy and the Vietnamese were worthy of support simply because they were fighting back against enormous odds and winning at that. The pervasive anti-Americanism that was inbred in the Canadian Left – and not only the Left – coupled with the David-versus-Goliath nature of the war made anyone with the least sense of fair play and decency sympathetic to the Vietnamese.

What the antiwar movement actually accomplished is hard to evaluate. More than pressure from the antiwar movement, it was Trudeau's crafty policy of opening the door to model, middle class, educated, white, English-speaking immigrants that motivated the welcome extended to draft resisters. Dow and other firms were never closed down. In the end it was the Vietnamese who won the war, but many Canadian activists felt at least a small part of their victory as their own. The movement served as a training ground for many who led later social and union struggles.

Now: Afghanistan

How far we are from that as Canada embarks upon its own imperialist adventure in Afghanistan. How far we are from a cohesive antiwar movement that actively opposes Canadian involvement in new wars – not just complicity but real "boots on the ground" involvement.

Every generation and situation is different. We can only draw so many lessons from the Vietnam antiwar experience. Certainly a vital and effective antiwar movement would benefit from a unitary coalition of groups around a single slogan ("Support Our Troops – Bring Them Home!" is the best I've seen). The link between military spending and cuts to social services, education, health care and everything else that matters to most people is there to be made and is not a stretch by any means. We need a movement that explains that it is up to the Afghanis to solve their own problems and that, however repugnant some of the folks on "the other side" are, they are no worse than "our own" warlords, misogynists, drug impresarios and such.



Challenging imperialism at home: Canadian troops occupied Quebec in 1970 in response to the growing Quebec independence movement.

The fact that many solidarity groups have embraced a pan-Middle East approach, linking Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine and working on all three fronts, is valid from a political perspective, but is not the basis for a campaign that can mobilize tens of thousands around getting Canadian troops out of Afghanistan. While an organization like the New Socialists can work to build solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles in all countries in the Middle East and beyond, building a broad movement that can be effective requires a narrower but sharper focus. This might be the most important lesson we can learn from the antiwar movement of the 60s. ★

GAY LIBERATION

Coming Out of 1968

by Alan Sears

The mobilizations of 1968 created a widespread sense of uprising that spilled over into the years that followed. In June 1969, cops conducting yet another routine raid on the Stonewall Inn gay bar in New York were confronted by an angry crowd that fought back and started a riot. The commitment to street activism, freedom, self-expression and real participatory democracy that grew out of 1968 set the context for the launch of lesbian feminism and gay liberation.

In 1969, a routine raid on the Stonewall Inn gay bar led to a riot that launched Gay Liberation.

The tone of early lesbian and gay liberation writing was bold and rebellious. While lesbians and gays have gained a great deal since then, it is important to be reminded of the time when gay liberation was seen as a challenge to the sex/gender structure, the compulsory family and the system as a whole. This is not to say that these pioneers got everything right, or that we can, should or even could go back to those politics. It is simply to show how broad the vision of sexual liberation was in the context of widespread militancy.

Harbinger, a Toronto underground newspaper, included an article on gay liberation in its 33rd issue. The article begins, "Look out straights! Here comes the Gay Liberation Front, springing up like warts all over the bland face of Amerika, causing shudders of indigestions in the delicately balanced bowels of the Movement."

This in-your-face tone continued through the article. Lesbians and gays were presented as rebels against the sex/gender system. "We are men and women who, from the time of our earliest memories, have been in revolt against the sex role structure and the nuclear family structure." This is a rebellion that started in childhood. "We were rebels from our earliest days – somewhere, maybe just about the time we started to go to school, we rejected straight society. Unconsciously."

Gay liberation was about making that rebellion conscious and carrying it forward. "Get in touch with the reasons that made you reject straight society when you were a kid ... and realize that you were right. Straight roles stink."

Gay liberation began to take its place in the movement, the broad network of activists building links across struggles. This included a presence at the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention on September 5-7, 1970. The "Male Homosexual Workshop" released a manifesto that included the slogan, "No revolution without us! An army of lovers cannot lose!"

The manifesto listed a series of demands, notably:

1. The right to be gay, any time, any place.
2. The right to free physiological changes and modification of sex upon demand.
5. Every child's right to develop in a non-sexist, non-possessive atmosphere, which is the responsibility of all people to create.
6. That a free education system present the entire range of human sexuality, without advocating any one form or style; that sex roles and sex-determined skills not be fostered by the schools.
12. The abolition of the nuclear family because it perpetuates the false categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality.

The document concluded with the words:

Gay power to gay people!
All power to the people!
Seize the time!

The lesbian workshop focused a great deal on child care and feminist demands. These included:

3. Communal care of children: Children should be allowed to grow, in a society of their peers, cared for by adults whose aim is not to perpetrate any male-female role programming. ...

4b. Because women have been systematically denied information and knowledge and the opportunity for acquiring these we demand open enrollment of all schools to all women, financial support to any woman who needs it, on-the-job training with pay for all women attending technical schools and under apprenticeship.

4d. The power and technology of defense are invested in men. Since these powers are used to intimidate women, we demand training in self-defense and the use of defense machinery. A Women's Militia would be organized ....

Much of this bold revolutionary vision has been lost. A return to some of the early documents of gay liberation is a useful reminder of key elements in a project of sexual emancipation. ★

Sources: *Harbinger 33* (1971), and *The Gay Militants: How Gay Liberation Began in America, 1969-71* by Don Teal (1995).

Raising the Velvet Fist

by Susan Ferguson

We consider the government of Canada is in a state of war with the women of Canada. If steps are not taken to implement our demands by Monday, May 11, 1970, at 3:00 P.M. we will be forced to respond by declaring war on the Canadian government.

Abortion Caravan, 1970

Mary Elizabeth Alejo-Aytin / Isis International-Manila

Heady words for heady times. This ultimatum issued by the organizers of the Abortion Caravan – a thousands-strong cross-country march to call for the repeal of a one-year-old abortion law – says something about the spirit and politics of the women's liberation movement in Canada in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Such militancy sounds almost quaint today, so removed are we from the historical and ideological moment that inspired it. But the notion that women were at war with the state, however exaggerated, was rooted in the growing anger, politicization and confidence of many thousands of women. That mood was fuelled – and further stoked – by the era's generalized civil unrest encompassing the nationalist struggle in Quebec, the militant fight for native rights, Third World resistance movements, and antiwar and civil rights protest inspired by events south of the border.

While what's called the "second wave" of the women's movement was a diverse, politically-divided social force with plenty of weaknesses, its politics stand out and deserve to be celebrated for one overriding reason. It put women's liberation – not just equality but freedom – on the feminist map. As with all past struggles, the story of the radicalization of the women's liberation movement and its aftermath may not provide a blueprint for social change, but it clearly has something to say about the possibilities and limits of challenging power today.

Susan Ferguson is an editorial associate of New Socialist *magazine. The* Velvet Fist, *after which this article is titled, was a Toronto feminist newspaper published from 1970 to 1972.*

Post-war Feminism

To begin this story in the 1960s is to risk downplaying the significance of earlier struggles. The image of the 1950s as a period of stability and affluence, a period when the nuclear family flourished and women happily assumed their roles as wives and mothers, is just that, an image. Women in that era, though legally equal to men insofar as they had the right to vote, could own property, go to universities, hold jobs and file for divorce, still weren't satisfied.

Across the country they pushed for equal pay, daycare, seniority rights at work, and better healthcare, and mobilized against discrimination in the workplace. Thousands of women attending Union catholique des fermières meetings in Quebec (despite its name, it was predominantly an urban association), discussed everything from contraception to work and education for girls, and circulated copies of Simone de Beauvoir's *Le Deuxième Sexe* (published in 1949, and available in English as *The Second Sex* by 1953).

A self-conscious feminism developed within unions, professional associations, community organizations and political parties. By 1960, the peace group Voice of Women (VOW), became the first women's group with a feminist vision to make a mark on the Canadian political landscape. It was also one of the few ever to successfully unite Quebec and English-Canadian feminists. Inspired by Ottawa's negotiations with Washington about placing nuclear missiles in North Bay, Ontario and La Macaza, Quebec, VOW chapters took up other issues as well, including the campaign to legalize birth control, and support for Indochinese and black Nova

HOME.CA.INTER.NET/~VOW/HISTORY.HTM

VOW contingent at a 1960s peace march.

Scotian women.

VOW's politics fell squarely within what is called the "maternal feminism" camp – the ideology that dominated early 20th-century first-wave feminism, in which women fought for and won many political and economic rights granting them formal equality with men. Maternal feminism stresses that the values inherent in women's roles as caretakers and nurturers at home should be applied to the public realm, and that women, as bearers of those values, have a special place in seeing that process through.

Despite its implicit and powerful critique of political priorities (highlighting, among other things, the inhumanity of much of what goes on in the name of politics), maternal feminism is "reformist" in that it fails to challenge structural roots of oppression – and "essentialist" in that it dangerously reinforces assumptions about women's "nature" that are, in fact, central to our experiences of oppression. Maternal feminism has also often been articulated historically in nationalist and racist terms.

Although VOW never espoused the eugenicist politics of earlier maternal feminists, it was explicitly anti-American and operated from a white, middle class women's perspective. They and their liberal feminist counterparts tended to look to parliament and professional bodies to support their demands. The inherent conservatism of maternal feminism, along with an orientation toward equality rights and "respectable" political methods, won them considerable, if not always uncontested, support.

Their biggest victory came in 1967 with the establishment of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, and its report three years later outlining 167 recommendations concerning, among other issues, daycare, maternity leave, family law and the Indian Act. Shortly thereafter a national women's group eventually called the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) was established, and has served ever since as an umbrella group to which feminists of various political leanings belong.

However distinct NAC's and VOW's politics were from the left feminists of the second wave, ideas, influence and membership were not always so clearly demarcated on the ground. And "institutionalized feminism," as Adamson, Briskin and McPhail call it, had a clear social impact. VOW's 1962 Peace Train – in which 500 women descended on Parliament Hill – directly inspired the 1970 Abortion Caravan mentioned at the beginning of this article. As well, "VOW was a crucial link between generations of feminists" through which women learned "to become agents of change on their own behalf as women and not just on behalf of others" in the words of feminist political scientist Jill Vickers.

Not Just on Behalf of Others: Demanding a Better World

If organizing for peace was a crucial link between old and new feminists, the social, economic and political cauldron of the 1960s provided ideal conditions for brewing up new, more daring, feminist ideas and actions. Women entered the workforce in ever-greater numbers, and more and more families, many with young children, relied on two incomes. Higher education expanded, and the

number of young women at university quadrupled, with many attracted by the notion of an alternative to marriage and motherhood. (The birth control pill was introduced in 1966.)

Meanwhile, other political activists were proposing their own alternatives: Quebec nationalists and indigenous militants challenged the presumptions and discriminations of the established order with visions of free and independent nations. Workers too were on the offensive, with legal strikes and illegal wildcats taking place across the country.

The sense that another world was possible permeated the student left at the time. Local chapters of Student Union for Peace Action and the Students for a Democratic Union provided support for US draft resisters and held sit-ins and militant protests on campuses against nuclear arms and the war in Vietnam. While women worked alongside men in student groups and such left groups as the Waffle (a radical wing of the New Democratic Party [NDP]), the Young Socialists and the Revolutionary Marxist Group, they also started to organize specifically around feminist issues within those organizations and beyond. By 1968, sizeable and active women's groups had emerged out of the student left at Simon Fraser University, University of Alberta, University of Regina, and University of Toronto, many of which quickly moved off campus, launching community-based women's centres and services in an effort to connect with working class women.

Women also gathered in consciousness-raising (C-R) groups to talk, read, debate and support each other in the attempt to deepen their understanding of their experiences of oppression. The belief that the "personal is political" – an empowering idea that spoke to the depoliticization of private, domestic life under capitalism – became the basis for questioning all aspects of life, from living and loving arrangements to the healthcare and education systems to work and politics. C-R groups were important venues for both validating women's experiences, and planting seeds of change. Through these groups, a minority of feminists developed alternatives to accepted social structures, setting up communal homes, kitchens and daycares.

Feminists organized around various local issues, but demands for daycare, access to abortion and support work for striking women workers were common priorities across the country.

Feminists organized around various local issues, but demands for daycare, access to abortion and support work for striking women workers were common priorities across the country. In 1969, a sit-in at the Board of Governors at Simon Fraser University and a University of Toronto housing occupation resulted in campus-based daycares. In Fredericton, Montreal, Toronto, Saskatoon, Vancouver and elsewhere, feminists fought to repeal the Therapeutic Abortion Committee law – passed in 1969, it legalized abortions only for women whose cases had been approved by a committee of healthcare professionals. In April 1970, the Vancouver Women's Caucus launched the Abortion Caravan, complete with a coffin draped in hangers to symbolize deaths from backstreet abortions. On arriving in Ottawa, 30 women chained themselves to the parliamentary gallery, and shut down Parliament – a first in the country's history.

Socialist Feminism's Contribution

This form of activism was both the result of, and inspiration to, attempts to theorize women's oppression. Left feminists debated and discussed theories of women's oppression and political priorities in political meetings, C-R groups, national conventions (the first one was in Saskatoon in 1970), and in the pages of their publications (*The Velvet Fist, The Pedestal* and *Women Unite!* are three examples).

They were quick to criticize the limited goals and scope of liberal feminism, having moved from reading de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) to Juliet Mitchell's early articulation of socialist-feminist politics in the *New Left Review* article "Women: The Longest Revolution" (1966). They had also moved from the idea that sexism was a result of bad policy, ignorance and unequal opportunity, to the idea that it was historically rooted in

Voices of 68

We are told that our sense of oppression is not legitimate. We are told women's liberation is a secondary issue, to be dealt with after the war is won. But the basis of women's oppression is economic in a sense that far predates capitalism and the market economy and that is woven through the whole fabric of socialization. Our claims are the most radical, for they entail restructuring even the nuclear family. Nowhere on earth are women free now, although in some places things are marginally better. What we want we will have to invent ourselves.

From Marge Piercy, The Grand Coolie Damn *(1969)*

the very institutions of bourgeois society – and in the family in particular.

The socialist-feminist analysis insisted that women's oppression was integral to the class character of capitalist society. And while many disagreed about the precise nature of the relationship between class and gender, that conviction prompted left feminists to make links with working class women in their activism. One vibrant area of work was the wages-for-housework campaign. Arguing that women's domestic labour was essential to the profit-making machine – without it, men and children would not be fed, clothed and rested or reared to go to work and labour directly for capital – wages-for-housework committees in the Canadian Labour Congress and elsewhere organized rallies and called for state-funded compensation. The NDP briefly took up the cause as well.

Feminists also fought in unions for paid maternity leave (won first by Canadian Union of Postal Workers in 1981), equal pay and against discriminatory hiring and workplace practices. Feminist-organized mass pickets shut down the auto-parts manufacturer Fleck in a 1978 strike. Radio Shack, Fotomat and Irwin Toys were also targets of feminist strike support in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Strike support work by the wives of INCO miners transformed many women personally as they led increasingly militant pickets and spoke out publicly about their struggle – a struggle they ultimately won. It also transformed the feminist movement, as Sudbury miners' wives led Toronto's first International Women's Day March in 1978.

This activism came amid a vigorous and often acrimonious debate among left feminists revolving around such issues and questions as the relationship of feminists to left groups: Is gender work a distraction from class struggle? Can women be united across classes? Should women work on single-issue campaigns that are potentially more inclusive, or push for nothing short of total liberation? Perhaps most explosive was the debate about the degree to which the left feminist focus on the family spoke to the experiences

The socialist-feminist analysis insisted that women's oppression was integral to the class character of capitalist society.

of lesbians, native, black and immigrant women. Increasingly such debates led to segregated events, associations and organizing, and fuelled an identity-based or "difference" politics and, among some, a hostility to theorizing.

According to some accounts of the period, this process of clarifying and theorizing precipitated the movement's decline. Certainly, divisions and organizational splits developed in and through such debates. But this misses the significance of the changing political and social context in which women were organizing. The wave of social radicalism was receding. The ruling class was on the offensive, introducing anti-union laws and cutting funds to social programs. The idea that an alternative to patriarchal capitalism was possible became increasingly difficult to sustain (see Alan Sears' article in *New Socialist* 61).

Pushed onto the defensive, left feminists retreated from popular mobilizations. Instead, they focused on areas in which they were already having an impact, namely providing local social service alternatives such as shelters, health services, bookstores and women's credit unions. They also continued their work within unions, as the fight for equal pay for equal work took hold. And they continued to think through some of the difficult issues that the 1960s and 1970s had presented, a task that was viable for feminists within the academy.

It is also in the 1970s and 1980s that immigrant, indigenous and lesbian women developed their own organizations, services and publications. Although not necessarily socialist-feminist, many retained a radical critique, often foregrounding issues of poverty, class and social justice. And while the growing divisions were often unbridgeable – the Toronto International Women's Day Committee came close to imploding on a number of occasions – the political character of the period had changed. Opportunities for linking feminist causes to a broader political critique and mobilization were fewer and further between.

Still, some momentum was evident in larger centres. Indigenous feminists fought against the Indian Act and for better housing and social services by organizing yet another trek – this one from Oka (near Montreal) to Ottawa. Another important example is the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics in Toronto, which maintained a steadfastly socialist-feminist perspective, making access to abortion, not just the legal right for a woman to obtain one, a key plank of abortion politics in the 1980s.

But in the context of retreating social movements and a shrinking left, the moment had passed in Toronto and elsewhere for a sustained, broad fight-back. Such a moment is bound to recur – we saw flickers of it with the anti-globalization activism in the early 1990s. Even though the feminism it encompasses will undoubtedly look and feel very different from that of the 1960s and 1970s, the stories of this earlier period will provide a rich archive of experience to be ignored at our peril. ★

Recommended Reading

The feminism of the 1960s has been documented in a variety of excellent books. I've drawn heavily on *Feminists Organizing for Change* by Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin and Margaret McPhail. While I reference the Quebec women's movement, my experience and reading deals predominantly with English Canada. Micheline Dumont's chapter in *Challenging Times* edited by Constance Backhouse and David Flaherty is a good place to start for anyone interested in following up on Quebec feminism. To learn more about the left feminist critique of the family, see Sandra Sarner and Gabrielle Gérin's article in *New Socialist 63*.

QUEBEC ON FIRE

Struggles for independence & social change

BY ANTOINE CASGRAIN

Quebec in the late 1960s was marked by a strong upswing in the struggle for Quebec independence and the rise of several social movements. October 68 saw the first major general strike by the Quebec student movement. Students at 23 CÉGEPs (general and vocational education colleges) went out on strike. The colleges were occupied day and night. The strikers were protesting an elitist educational system ill-adapted to their needs, which was a legacy of the old *collèges classiques*. They did not want to be merely cogs in a consumer, hierarchical society.

In March 1969, a few months after their strike, a 15,000-strong demonstration called for McGill University, a symbol of British colonialism, to become French-language and for an end to the inequality under which young francophones did not have the same access to social advancement as young anglophone graduates from this elite English-language university. This led to the call for a French-language, public, free and accessible university, and in turn to the birth of the Université du Québec.

Four Fronts of Struggle

There were many long, militant strikes in Quebec, marked by confrontations with the police. For example, Montreal 7-Up plant workers had been on strike since summer 1967. In 1968, pro-independence groups organized a march in solidarity with workers involved in job actions. The march culminated in violent confrontations. The Domtar plant workers occupied their workplace to block its closing while taking the means needed for their self-defence. In industry at the time, national oppression took the form of confrontations between English-speaking bosses and French-speaking workers. This situation was a stimulus to the desire for national independence.

"Student Power." Scene from university occupation in Quebec.

The late 1960s also saw the emergence of new trade union militancy due to the massive, swift organization of the public and para-public sectors. This would later give rise to the huge 1972 Common Front. The labour movement also formed an alliance with the popular movement by developing the Second Front strategy. This entailed extending the workplace negotiations to neighbourhood struggles for better housing, and better public transport and living conditions.

At the time, Montreal was experiencing a major movement towards modernization. Road and highway building shamelessly evicted the most disadvantaged people. Popular movements of resistance to the displacement took shape in the form of citizen committees.

The women's movement came into the spotlight in October 1969 in response to the banning of demonstrations by Montreal Mayor Jean Drapeau. This period also saw many demonstrations organized in the city by Quebec nationalists, citizen committees and trade unionists. Women were the first to challenge the decree outlawing demonstrations. Two hundred women defied the ban by chaining themselves together in a public square. In the wake of this action the Front de libération des femmes du Québec was formed with the slogan "No Quebec liberation without women's liberation."

Independence

Four mobilization fronts converged in the struggle for Quebec independence – the movements of students, workers, women and citizens' committees. At the time, this struggle was set in a specific international context – the independence struggle among colonized countries against the metropolis or so-called First World. It was also a context marked by national struggles in Latin America against US imperialist domination.

What did Quebec independence mean back then? It was a matter of liberating French Canadians from the English-Canadian yoke, which kept them second-class citizens and denied their right to self-determination. Independence also meant opposing the dual economic domination Quebec experienced – Canadian domination and US economic domination. This national struggle was seen as a driving force that would stoke discontent with the unequal capitalist system.

The national struggle would see the emergence of different political parties, including Rassemblement pour l'indépendance nationale (RIN). In June 1968, RIN called a demonstration against the presence of then-Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, who was among the guests of honour at the St-Jean-Bap-

Antoine Casgrain is a member of Gauche Socialiste (GS). This text was a contribution on behalf of GS during French Marxist Daniel Bensaïd's Quebec tour about the impact of May 68, 40 years later. Translation by Maria Gatti.

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"The people, only the people are the moving force, the creator of universal history." Poster from Quebec 1970

tiste parade celebrating Quebec's national holiday. Demonstrators were met with ferocious police repression and many were arrested.

Pierre Vallières' book *White Niggers of America* was a strong expression of pro-independence feelings at the time. Vallières compares the Québécois situation and struggle with that of black people in the US.

But this rising independence movement had to choose between two orientations. The first option would be tactical support to the Parti Québécois (PQ). This party was launched on April 21, 1968 and already had two members of the National Assembly at the time of its launch – René Lévesque and François Aquin. The PQ was initially a split from the Quebec Liberal Party (the Mouvement souveraineté-association). It would join forces with a small, rightist pro-independence party, Ralliement national, to found the PQ.

The Lévesque leadership refused a merger with RIN, which it viewed as too militant and too closely linked to social movements. RIN decided to dissolve itself just the same and called upon its activists to join the PQ on an individual basis and to stand up for more progressive positions within that party. Their logic was that it would be easier to achieve the social movements' demands through the PQ after Quebec became independent.

A second option would take the stand that independence and socialism had to be linked. The independence struggle had to be led by and on behalf of social movements and in particular by the workers' movement. The primary objective was to support social movements, but the movements were set in the context of Quebec's specific national situation, the reason independence was a social project. This option was put forth by a galaxy of small groups – Front de libération du Québec, Front de libération populaire, Comités indépendance et socialisme…

This current was hit head-on during the October Crisis when the Canadian army intervened in Quebec to support police repression of social and nationalist movements. The socialism and independence option was marginalized by repression and by the choice many activists of the era made to reconsider RIN's choice to join the PQ. A good many disappointed socialists turned towards the Marxist-Leninist (ML) movements, which swept away the national question.

Lessons for Today?

What lessons can we draw from 1968 in Quebec to better understand the political issues in today's Quebec? Were the 1968 movements utopian? It would be better to say that these social movements were the bearers of a possible project that did not come to fruition.

Today, new social movements are taking up these social transformation projects anew. These include the global justice movement, which reached a high point at the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in 2001. The antiwar movement, like the movement against the Vietnam war in the late 1960s, regained a great deal of vigour in Quebec in particular due to the Canadian army intervention in Afghanistan but also the Bush government intervention in Iraq. Another important movement has been the major women's mobilizations against poverty. The 2005 student movement is another new social movement. And finally, the ecological movement has become more and more prominent, signalling the need for this ecological dimension in the anti-capitalist struggle.

A new party can become an instrument in an active break with the PQ. The PQ has organized defeats and inflicted a neoliberal agenda on the Quebec people. Now we have a political alternative in Québec solidaire. It is small, but it exists. For the first time in decades, there is a significant political alternative to the left of the PQ. Québec solidaire won't be built in a vacuum, but as a broad project that we can develop among well-meaning citizens. It will be grounded in the social struggles of the workers' and popular movements, and those of women and youth.

We have to rebuild our international alliances with the black movement in the US and here with the aboriginal peoples who are also struggling for their self-determination. We must also build alliances with progressives in English Canada who are fighting the same free trade agreements and globalization. Finally, we have to show that the logic of profit is destroying our planet. This proves that the need to link socialism and ecology has become more and more pressing and urgent. Finally, we have to renew our commitment for another future.

In conclusion, this poem by Gaston Miron, radical poet of Quebec liberation:

we will make you, Land of Quebec
a bed of resurrections
and a thousand lightning metamorphoses
of our leavens from which the future shall rise
and of our wills which will concede nothing
men shall hear your pulse beating through history
this is us winding through the October autumn
the russet sound of roe-deer in the sunlight
this is our future, clear
and committed

Excerpted from "L'octobre" (1970)
Translated by Benoît Rheault (1987) ★

Workers and Wildcats

The 60s "illegal" strike wave

by Bryan D. Palmer

Quebec union leader Michel Chartrand "spoke the language of the New Left"

The mid-to-late 1960s are politically associated with the rise of the New Left. To be sure, this New Left, critical of Stalinism as well as mainstream bourgeois politics, took its stands of resistance against war and arbitrary authority, against racism and the exploitation of the working class.

But the 60s are also most often associated with youthful rebellion against alienation. Its home base, in the minds of many, was the university campus. New Left leading figures were usually understood to be as likely to come from the affluent suburbs as the proletarian neighbourhood.

Yet there were connections between the New Left and labour. Not all trade unionists in the 1960s were reactionary "hard hats," a US image that grew out of the undeniable reality that some workers defended the war in Vietnam and espoused antagonism to the marches and protests of the decade. A number of Canadian and US labour organizations nevertheless championed the extension of civil rights that was central to social change in the 60s.

Young radicals in the universities supported striking workers, many of whom were adopting increasingly militant tactics. Union leaders such as fiery Michel Chartrand of the Montreal Central Council of the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CNTU) spoke the language of the New Left. Chartrand lived the understanding that a different world was possible and, on occasion, landed in jail for his outspokenness and willingness to defy constituted authority.

It was at the level of the mid-1960s upheaval in Canada's trade unions, however, that the youthful rebelliousness of the decade actually entered into the country's labour organiza-

tions. No one considered this to be a New Left phenomenon. But the wave of "illegal" wildcat strikes that rocked class relations in 1965-1966 were a reflection, inside the workers' movement, of the same processes that were galvanizing universities and would receive so much journalistic coverage in 1968. As veteran trade unionist and labour journalist Ed Finn noted in 1965, "The wildcat strike might be regarded as the trade union equivalent of the students' sit-in." The sit-in itself was a well-known labour tactic that both civil rights campaigners and student radicals appropriated for their own purposes.

The Meaning of Wildcatting

In the mid-1960s the legal regime of collective bargaining was not quite two decades old. A post-World War 2 settlement linked capital, the state and trade unions in a legally-sanctioned system that recognized and regulated collective bargaining for the first time in Canadian history. Most trade union leaders regarded the compromises of "industrial legality" as great victories for workers. They knew well the hostility of powerful employers to workers' collective rights, and they had fought for decades to win the securities and protections of legal bargaining. Many had experienced first-hand the violence of scabs, hired thugs and police, and felt the sting of a justice system that valued property over people.

As the post-war settlement aged, it thus separated a growingly restive and increasingly youthful rank-and-file from a leadership layer of trade unionists whose loyalties to the new legal regime were solidified in the material trappings of an age of affluence – bigger paycheques, expansive consumerism and seemingly settled class relations. It was perhaps not accidental that this history unfolded as communists were driven from the trade unions in a labour equivalent of the cold war.

These developments were paralleled, moreover, by the bureaucratization of unions. More and more reliance was placed on paid staff and the negotiation, interpretation and enforcement of complicated collective agreements. In the 1940s such agreements between unions and employers might run to a dozen pages. By the mid-1960s they could be book-length compendia of clauses and sub-clauses.

An axiom of pre-1945 class relations had been "strike now, grieve later." Workers were willing to walk off the job in protest in order to secure justice. With the achievement of the post-war settlement, however, this maxim was reversed. The labour movement often seemed to be operating under the assumption that all of the formal procedures for dispute resolution had to be explored to the full before strikes could be mounted. And those strikes had to be undertaken with all due consideration to the rights of all parties, capital and the state included. Most crucially, the bedrock of the post-war settlement was that no strike could take place during the life of a collective agreement. If workers violated this "first rule" of legal collective bargaining, their unions were subject to potentially bankrupting financial penalties and workers' leaders could be jailed.

Wildcat strikes were relatively spontaneous expressions of discontent with the job and the failure of collective bargaining to address specific concerns.

To wildcat, in the mid-1960s, was to strike a blow against the post-war settlement from inside the house of labour. Wildcat strikes were relatively spontaneous expressions of discontent with the job and the failure of collective bargaining to address specific concerns. Like all strikes they were, to be sure, fundamentally directed against capital, but wildcats were also different than legally-sanctioned strikes. They were often posed against the union bureaucracies that now seemed far removed from the working-class ranks they supposedly served. In their fundamental wildness they were explosive in their antagonism to the state and its regime of law, order, and respectable class relations.

As such they were capable of violence and irreverence that struck a dagger in the bosom of bourgeois authority. If the wildcat was indeed the trade union equivalent of the student sit-in, it brought to the table of protest an arresting arsenal – sabotage, Molotov cocktails, small arms and brazen refusal to go quietly into anyone's good legalistic night. The wildcat was the ominous hour of workers' defiant refusal to be made compliant parts of the machine of class collaboration. It complicates our understanding of the labour movement's long march of "progress" and the outcomes that this produced for workers.

The Demography of Dissent

New Left uprisings and campus rebellion in the 1960s were often attributed to the post-World War 2 baby boom. Youth culture stamped the decade with much that was new and transformative. The teenager was recognized as a potent cultural force, a new market for capitalism's acquisitive individualism to tap and even – with escalating fears of ostensibly rampant juvenile delinquency – as a challenge to society itself. Rebellious youth, for some commentators, managed to replace cold war communists as the major threat to the "free world."

In the unions too, youth figured forcefully. The Canadian labour force grew younger over the course of the 1960s. Wage earners in the 14 to 24 age brackets increased dramatically as a percentage of the workforce. Male youth, in particular, were especially likely to be dependent on wage work. The expansion of the universities by 1965 had not yet really drawn the sons and daughters of the working class into the classrooms of higher education. Men, as opposed to women, were

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CUPW.CA

Women postal workers made gains after the landmark postal wildcat strike of 1965.

not expected to spend their lives caring for family members. They were breadwinners in the making.

To be young and working-class in the mid-1960s, however, was at best an unsettling experience. Young workers faced unemployment rates that came close to doubling those of their older counterparts. Like all youth of the 1960s, male workers chaffed under the patriarchal, family-based constraints that saw them subordinated to fathers. They likened the job to the home: someone was always telling them what to do. One 1968 study of Canadian industrial relations noted "an undeniable tendency in this generation to question and challenge authority itself and those in a position to exercise it." Young workers, like young students, listened to rock bands such as The Who. In Peter Townshend's patented stutter they discerned the anthem of an era:

People try to put us d-down, talking 'bout my generation
Just because we get around, talking 'bout my generation
Things they do look awful c-cold, talking 'bout my generation
Hope I die before I get old, talking 'bout my generation.

What this meant in Canada's unions was that young workers were a powderkeg ready to explode. When a veteran Manitoba union militant in the railway yards looked back on the mid-1960s in the early 1970s he concluded, "We've got three enemies, the company, the government, and the union. We can't beat them all now, but we are starting something. It's the young guys that are responsible for this. They started it. … It's a new generation."

Labour journalists looked at the rank-and-file upheavals of the mid-1960s and had no trouble attributing the "new ferment" in the unions "to the arrival, for the first time in any numbers, of the young, swinging, questing generation." A Quebec labour activist noted that, "It used to be that we waited for orders from the union representative, but that is not the way with the young people." A Steelworker official confirmed the diagnosis: "It's completely impossible to give these young people the old hogwash. … You can't fool them by holding up the bogey of depression, the old you-ought-to-be-grateful-to have a job at all… These kids won't take it. They expect to be treated like human beings."

"A Plague of Strikes"

The mid-1960s saw worry in the upper echelons of the state that the lid of containment was blowing off class relations. In the House of Commons, the minister of labour deplored the "near epidemic of labour disputes and the hair trigger atmosphere that attends so many negotiations." *The Globe and Mail* editorialized in May 1966 that Canada faced a dangerous breakpoint, besieged as it was by "a plague of strikes."

Officially, the 1965-1966 years count some 1,150 recognized strikes. Estimated working time that evaporated in the heat of class struggle tripled in these years. It is difficult to calculate from such official statistics exactly how many of these strikes were wildcats, precisely because many such illegal work stoppages were never formally recorded. But at the least the number of wildcats approached 500 and comprised anywhere from 20 to 50 percent of all work stoppages. Official statistics gathered from Ontario in 1966 concede that 27 percent of the strikes in the province were illegal, having been launched during the life of a collective agreement.

Striking Against the Union

What shocked the partners in the post-war settlement – labour leaders, employers and state functionaries, be they politicians, judges or police – was the extent to which many of these strikes were waged in clear opposition to established trade union bureaucracies.

"Listen to the voice of reason," one Steelworker official pleaded, begging wildcat workers to end their protest and allow the union to "get back to the bargaining table." Sarnia and Windsor gas workers undertook an illegal walkout late in the autumn of 1965, and it stretched into the New Year. As it ran its course, the union's entire slate of shop stewards resigned in protest against their labour officialdom. Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen leader, J.A. Pelletier, was "booed out of the Point St. Charles yard when he turned up to urge" 1,900 Montreal rail workers to return to their jobs. He left in a huff. Workers in another wildcat offered an elaboration on their antagonisms: "This is a non-confidence vote (in the union executive), we are taking things into our own hands."

When Steelworkers Local 1005 President John Morgan and union area supervisor Stew Cooke implored wildcat pickets at Hamilton's massive Stelco works to open the gates and return to work, they were shocked by the vehemence with which they were denounced. "We're fed up with you, we don't want you," one striker jeered in derision at his union president. Morgan retreated in tears. "It was an ugly scene," one official union supporter reported. "They were shouting at us like some of them had gone mad.

We were lucky to get out of there alive." An invitation by Steelworkers officials to picket captains to meet with them and the negotiating committee at the union hall fared no better. Between 200 and 300 angry wildcatters rushed the gathering. Panicked by what they interpreted as a growing "mob psychology," union officials called in the police. The strikers were incensed. "Get the fuzz out of here. This is our hall. They have no right here!" screamed one militant.

Deploring the "leaderless, directionless, and futile" battle, the Steelworker bureaucracy publicly denounced the "irresponsible" elements behind the wildcat, withdrew all official union supports, took to the radio airwaves to suppress the strike, and asked the local law and order brigade to close down all taverns in the vicinity of Stelco, thereby depriving the strikers of both venues to meet and places to bolster their bodies with food and drink.

Unprecedented in the history of Canadian class relations, the wildcat wave of 1965-1966 marked a major shift in the nature of working-class dissent. An illegal railway striker in Montreal put it clearly: youthful militants were "fed up with excuses from… union leaders." In British Columbia, electrical workers defied their union's orders, battled the RCMP as they wildcatted, and changed the locks on the union hall so no international union officials or their own local president could gain access to the building. A 1968 Task Force on Canadian Industrial Relations pointed out that worker dissatisfaction in the mid-1960s was sometimes running "as deeply against the union and collective bargaining as against management," producing a worrisome "rebellion of union members against their leaders." As wildcat fever spread, with 12,000 postal workers walking off the job in one of the largest illegal national walkouts, newspaper editorials bemoaned "the loss of control by union leaders."

The Wildness of the Wildcat

Youthful wildcatters were clearly not following scripted routines of respectable strike behaviour. The battles they waged were often wildly out of step with conventional practices.

The catalysts for wildcat strikes could be arrestingly mundane. Young auto workers at Chrysler, Ford, and de Havilland routinely rebelled against the company imposing compulsory overtime. But when they wildcatted and won the right to be let off work early to attend a St. Thomas, Ontario, hockey tournament in which their buddies were playing, it was a sign that the times were definitely changing.

So too were young workers increasingly pugnacious in the face of the law. Faced with injunctions prohibiting their illegal acts, they simply turned their backsides to the police and courts. A steelworker jailed for supporting women strikers at the Peterborough Tilco works spoke for many when he declared before the 1966 Royal Commission to inquire into the use of labour injunctions and the tension-ridden state of Ontario's class relations, "We no longer respect the law." In an act of elevated irony, 100 workers at Toronto's Hiram Walker distillery wildcatted when their bosses refused three of their number an opportunity to attend the commission's hearings.

What was most wild about the wildcat wave however was the violence that so often animated it. Inco workers in Sudbury, for instance, armed themselves with lengths of pipe, baseball bats, steel bars and ominous clubs. Roads were blockaded, hydro and telephone lines sabotaged, and a supply truck was stopped, overturned and rolled down an embankment. The *Toronto Telegram* reported that Inco's wildcat strikers carried shotgun and were prepared to "take on all comers." At the end of the strike one official confessed: "I saw the Molotov cocktails, the guns and the dynamite. The union lost control of the situation. Eventually we took truckloads of arms of one kind or another away from the picket lines."

The list of violent wildcat acts in 1965-1966 was endless. Quebec stevedores blockaded provincial ports in early June 1966, stealing cars, driving them to the docks, and then torching and dynamiting them. A month previously, Montreal's longshore workers, given to acts of vandalism and reputedly stockpiling dynamite on company property, elicited a 500-strong police patrol to restore order. Teamster wildcats in Ontario were marred by gunshot, sabotaged trucks and flares thrown into scab rigs. Even small strikes, like that of Board of Education caretakers in Chelmsford, Ontario, culminated in the blowing up of two cars.

Youthful wildcatters were clearly not following scripted routines of respectable strike behaviour. The battles they waged were often wildly out of step with conventional practices.

In Quebec, this labour violence often blurred into the *indépendentiste* cause of the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) and the Rassemblement pour l'Indépendence Nationale (RIN). The FLQ regularly supported striking workers by detonating bombs and the RIN was actively involved in the violent 1966 Dominion Ayers strike at Lachute. A huge solidarity rally was broken up by company guards on "Tear Gas Sunday," with the crowd tossing Molotov cocktails at their adversaries. Even the plywood company's president had his home attacked as rampaging strikers stoned the domicile and set its grounds ablaze.

Voices of 68 —

Humanity will only be happy the day the last bureaucrat is hanged with the guts of the last capitalist.

Wall slogan, Paris 1968

Politics and Wildcats

Quebec's mid-to-late 1960s labour revolt, in which ideas of anti-imperialism and Québec nationalism braced old class grievances with fresh New Left vocabulary of revolutionary possibility, culminated in a 1971-1972 Common Front of the increasingly radical CNTU, teachers and the Quebec Federation of Labour. A general strike by public sector workers unfolded. After labour leaders were sentenced to jail terms, many private sector workers joined the struggle.

The politicization of the turmoil in class relations was most evident in Quebec. Some of its hallmarks were the *La Presse* journalists' strike of 1964-1965; the late 1960s Mouvement de Libération du Taxi that battled the Murray Hill Limousine Company; and *les gars de Lapalme*, mail truck drivers who took on the federal government and their own union bureaucracy. All of this intersected with protests at Sir George Williams (now Concordia) against racism led by Caribbean students and McGill, the target of a movement to make the university francophone and pro-worker, McGill Français. There were also massive protests over language issues in Montreal's CÉGEPs. Black writers congresses, anti-Vietnam war demonstrations and support for Third World liberation movements and the Black Panthers coincided with labour's radicalization.

In English Canada, the politicization of class struggle in these years often grew out of the youthful wildcat wave. Many young militants found the old international unions, headquartered in the United States, unduly staid. They embraced radical nationalist critiques of the class collaboration of the bureaucratized labour leadership and aligned with a dissident "breakaway" movement that promised to create more democratic, Canadian-based trade unions. In Hamilton, the Stelco wildcat of 1966 was led by an autonomy group of "young, inexperienced activists" who parlayed a fusion of popular nationalism, militancy, and anti-establishment bravado into loud attacks on "sell-out" contracts and complicity of local and international leaders with management. Nationalist bodies like the Canadian Association of Industrial, Mechanical and Allied Workers (CAIMAW) critiqued the unions it grew out of and rallied workers to small, but increasingly vocal, alternative labour centres.

Young workers thus voiced their rejection of the old union order with the embrace of new organizations and visions of new political horizons for the workers' movement. "They're backward, conservative, old, wealthy people living in luxury who have less in common with the average guy in the plant than the bosses," said one disgruntled CAIMAW supporter in Winnipeg of his international union leadership. A former president of the Trail Steelworkers proclaimed in 1969, anti-imperialist antagonism to the war in Vietnam much on his mind: "The younger workers, because of the environment they've been brought up in and seeing the fallacies of their society, these have a stronger feeling of anti-Americanism. It's there, let's not kid ourselves, not only in Canada but all over the world."

As the 1960s ended, a new Canadian labour movement had not yet been born but, to paraphrase poet laureate of the decade Bob Dylan, the old labour movement was indeed busy dying. One significant part of this process was that young workers, tens of thousands of whom cut their class teeth on the wildcat wave of 1965-1966, had imbibed the lessons of Dylan's lyrics:

Ain't gonna work on Maggie's farm
no more.
Well, I try my best
To be just like I am,
But everybody wants you
To be just like them
They sing while you slave and I just
get bored.
I ain't gonna work on Maggie's farm
no more.

The 1970s would build on developments like these. Momentous class struggles unfolded, and reached into the 1980s. By that date, however, 1960s youthful workers were aging, and new winds of challenge and change blew against the labour movement and its allies. Neoliberalism fuelled an assault on the trade unions; the text of possibility for the workers' movement was rewritten. The 1960s promise of a New Left and a new labour movement often seemed submerged in the stormy seas of the changed material context of a world restructured by capitalist retrenchment and the ideologies of the New Right. But like Marx's "Old Mole," the passions and politics of the 1960s New Left were never truly gone, but merely waiting for the right moment to resurface. ★

Addressing the Imbalance

Anti-colonial & anti-racist struggles of the 60s

The histories of 1968 too often focus on the struggles of white folks in the global north – reducing the struggles of indigenous peoples, African Americans and Third World nations to background or catalysts. To address this imbalance, we present a series of articles reflecting on the crucial role of anti-colonial and anti-racist movements as forces in the social upheaval of the 1960s. We're unable to fully represent the spectrum of movements, but we are highlighting five of these that follow: the Red Power movement in Canada, the emergence of the Black Power movements in the United States, the struggle for liberation in Palestine, anti-colonial movements in Africa, and the Third World project of, in Vijay Prashad's words, "disarmament, national sovereignty, economic integrity, and cultural diversity" proposed by many ex-colonies.

The civil rights movement and its struggle against the legal and extra-legal racial segregation of African-Americans influenced the early New Left in the US. Later the terrain shifted and the Black Power movement proposed a more radical critique of structural racism. This influenced indigenous radicals in the Canadian state who began to organize around notions of Red Power.

Especially in the US, the New Left was born in the struggle against the Vietnam war and the racism by which the war was justified. The New Left not only developed in reaction against racism and imperialist war but stood in solidarity with the revolt of colonized people in what was increasingly referred to as the "Third World." This period also saw the founding of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the emergence of a revolutionary Palestinian struggle that continues 40 years later.

The upsurge of the 60s lasted a relatively short period – about 10 years. Many factors led to its decline, both external and internal. The anti-war, anti-imperialist and anti-racist struggles declined. The Third World project lost momentum when the basic tasks of national independence were won.

Imperialism has been on the offensive over the last two decades. There has certainly been resistance, especially in Latin America. In a very different context than 1968, the next New Left will have to make new connections between imperialism, racism and the multiple injustices of the capitalist system. ★

Howard Adams, 1967

Inspired by Third World anti-colonial movements and the Black Power movement in the US, Métis activist **Howard Adams** *became a leader of the Red Power movement in Canada in the 1960s. In 1999-2000,* **New Socialist** *worked with Adams to reprint several abridged extracts from his book* **A Tortured People: The Politics of Colonization** *(1995, with a revised edition published in 1997). Since that time Adams has passed away, but his radical spirit is kept alive by a new generation of young indigenous activists and non-indigenous allies. Here we present again Adams' reflections on the Red Power movement, along with a selection of responses by his successors.*

Red Power in the 1960s

by Howard Adams

All Native peoples across Canada, from Vancouver to New Brunswick, were restless. They were fed up with oppression, racism and injustice. They were fed up with being pushed around and they were ready to start pushing back. All across the land Indians and Métis were talking back to agents of Indian Affairs and Métis Council Administration. "Some Indians and Métis," wrote Stewart of the *Star Weekly*, "the timid, the elderly, the responsible, call this new aggressiveness self-determination; others, bolder, younger and more determined, call it Red Power."

In the 1960s there was a parallel between Red Power in Canada and Black Power in the US. When a racial minority people are oppressed for a lengthy period, despised on racial grounds, they will

inevitably decide to fight back. Self-righteous Canadians were looking across the border and saying to themselves that it can't happen here. But what was happening in the US was also happening in Canada. Indians and Métis were turning militant and radical, and proclaiming that they had nothing to lose.

In spite of the widespread protests and confrontational demonstrators, the history of Indian, Métis and Inuit liberation movements during the 1960s and 70s remains hidden from the public. Although there has been an explosion of publications, written by both aboriginals and whites, on the Métis and Indians in the last 20 years, none includes a discussion of the Native peoples' struggles during that important period. The ruling establishment has hidden this history in order to silence our people and deny us a sense of power and heritage.

When our battle for justice and liberation began in the early 1960s, Métis and Indian leaders were unsure what it would involve, what direction it would take, or how it would eventually end. The only thing we knew with any certainty was that our people were no longer willing to tolerate exploitation and oppression in the colonies, ghettos, and reserves. We were demanding political rights and better living conditions.

We needed sufficient food, or as we put it, we wanted to put "bannock and lard" on our tables. Our cold, leaking shacks needed to be fixed. We demanded welfare cheques that didn't leave us begging at the end of each month. But, more than that, we needed to be free from the colonizer's imprisoning welfare system. As indigenous peoples of Canada, we were determined to rid ourselves of colonial oppression in every possible manner.

Since I was intimately involved with aboriginal organizations and liberation struggles in Saskatchewan, I have greater

Lee Maracle, of Salish and Cree ancestry, became politicized in the 1960s. Her book *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel* (1975) is a testimony about that experience.

From *A Tortured People* by Howard Adams

Protest at the Baldwin Hotel

In the 1960s, our people arose with confidence and a counter consciousness – ideas against the ruling class – and we were prepared for aggressive confrontation. Our goal was to expose and then discredit racist policies, such as those practiced by the Baldwin Hotel in Saskatoon.

In August 1972, forty Indians and Métis were refused service one evening at the hotel. As the local paper reported, "The situation began when waiters of the beverage room refused to serve anyone of Indian origin." Although we were ignored, we did not cause a disturbance. We eventually decided to move to the service bar as a group to demand an explanation, but by that time the manager had called the police.

The bar was immediately surrounded by several policemen. But we were not intimidated. A few of us made passionate speeches condemning the manager and the police. They were treating us like trash. The tension was rising and many people in our group were on the verge of smashing the bar in anger and frustration. We left at that point because the incident, no matter how damaging to our pride, did not warrant a major confrontation.

The Baldwin's policy to deny Indians and Métis beer would never be condemned by the majority of whites. We returned to the Friendship Centre two blocks away, where we formed a committee to organize a demonstration to be held in front of the hotel the next day. A large group, including white supporters, turned out for the demonstration. Once we began picketing outside, the hotel stopped serving the white drunks they had already been pampering most of the day.

The customers were told that it was the Indians' and Métis' fault, thereby encouraging them to attack us while we were demonstrating peacefully. They came out and taunted us, hurled profanities, and called the Native women "squaws" and "whores." The police were also there, waiting with their paddy wagons, but not to protect us.

We concluded the demonstration without incident. Afterward, a complaint was laid under the Fair Accommodation Practices Act against Mr. Beavis, the hotel manager, but as expected, the white supremacy rulers and their institutions stuck together. Roy Romanow, then Attorney General, the judge and city police would not prosecute Mr. Beavis.

Nevertheless, the incident was a valuable lesson to the civil rights fighters. The action was part of learning to manage confrontations. It highlighted the interlinking network of the dominant colonizer class and the judiciary. It fuelled our determination to expose Canada's racist and oppressive society. ★

knowledge about them than those of other provinces. Consequently, I will focus on Saskatchewan organizations and political confrontations. However, Indian and Métis organizations throughout the nation were quite identical to those of Saskatchewan. The one exception in Saskatchewan is that the aboriginal liberation struggle was originally more militant and politically radical than those in other provinces, with the exception of the Mohawks.

The Federation of Saskatchewan Indians represented status Indians, while the Métis Society, led by Joe Amyote, a mainstream Métis, served the province's southern regions. Amyote sunk the organization into the mainstream psyche; he supported integration and government domination. In the north, Malcolm Norris and Jim Brady, devout socialists, led the Métis Association. These men had steered the organization for years, nourishing and politicizing aboriginal issues. Rod Bishop, a Métis from Green Lake, and I shared their views and joined them to turn Native dissension into a national democratic movement emphasizing the politics of self-determination.

As activists and radical leaders, we opposed traditional tribal chiefs and Métis collaborators who had betrayed the movement. Likewise, we opposed the growing class of Native elites allying with our enemies – government bureaucrats, white politicians, and other members of the corporate elite. Radical Native leaders advocated socialism. After all, capitalism was the system on which we were robbed of our lands, resources, and rights.

Activists like Brady and Norris educated our people about how the state prevented Natives from adopting or forming alternative ideologies, such as collectivism or socialism. The state smothered aboriginal peoples' culture and traditional ways of thinking, and then forced us to adopt a false consciousness. Because colonized people have been socialized into a state of dependency, they tend to leave important matters to their leaders.

Although Métis and Indians had occasionally resorted to local demonstrations and confrontations in the past, they lacked systematic organization, and strong collaborator-free leadership. To combat this phenomenon, we held study sessions and organized community gatherings to discuss critical issues about decolonization in simple terms. We had to tap into our people's most intense and personal emotions if we were going to encourage them to actively fight in decolonization struggles. Leaders spoke of our struggle in the context of imperialism in the Third World. It helped to feel that we were part of a global revolution against oppression.

If the ruling power gave us freedom, they could take it back whenever they wanted. To truly obtain freedom one has to own it, and our people could only own their freedom if they fought and seized it. Local people must be involved if they wanted local changes; they must become part of the solution. Local people should participate at all levels from strategy planning to mass demonstrations. Also, it is important to begin the battle where there is considerable home support.

By concentrating on local issues, we engaged in confrontations we felt we were sure to win. Neighbourhood activists acted as leaders and got a taste of victory. Regardless of the prize's small size, success buoyed and motivated our people to continue. We embraced the concepts of aboriginal nationalism and the necessity for confrontation. ★

RESPONSES TO HOWARD ADAMS

Legacies of Red Power

What brought me to thinking and reflecting about the Red Power of Howard Adams was his ability to motivate, inspire and lead …. It's those traditions of caring for the future, having pride in our respective tribal identities and right to the land that will carry us on.

Darlene Rose Okemaysim, nehiyaw of Beardy's and Okemasis First Nation

Adams' carefully constructed ideas have been fuel for myself and many others in terms of challenging our thinking and the strategies which we employ to change the lives of our people on this land.

Chiinuuks (Ruth Ogilvie), Tla-o-qui-aht and Checlesaht of the Nuu-chah-nulth Nation

When I read Howard Adams' descriptions of the racist, oppressive society of the 1960s, I am struck by how many of those problems persist, despite generation after generation of indigenous resistance. I don't know when we will learn; I don't know IF we will learn. But this is true: another four decades is too long to wait and see.

Adam Barker

VOICES OF 68

I'm Indian all the way, and always will be. I'm not going to stop fighting until I die, and I hope I'm a good example of a human being and of my tribe.

Anna Mae Pictou Aquash, Mi'kmaq activist from Nova Scotia, murdered in 1976 on the Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota.

INTERVIEW

The Dawn of Black Power

Manning Marable *is an historian and political scientist at Columbia University who became politically involved in 1968. He went on to help organize the Black Convention Movement during the 1970s and became one of the central figures in the Democratic Socialists of America in the 1980s.*
Elizabeth Hinton *spoke to Marable about the meaning and legacy of 1968 for black American politics.*

Civil Rights legislation in the mid-1960s dismantled legal segregation in the US but left many other aspects of racism untouched. In the aftermath, the thrust of African-American activism was invested in Black Power. Though there were differences over what Black Power meant, by 1968 many black activists had shifted away from a focus on integration and non-violence and agitated instead for self-determination "by any means necessary," in the words of Malcolm X.

How does your own political experience contribute to the larger political currents of 1968, but also what you refer to as the "Black Freedom Struggle" in your work?

1968 was a pivotal year in African-American social and political history. Most obviously, it was the moment when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. King's ideological trajectory in the last two years of his life moved him to the forefront of the antiwar movement. Throughout most of his career, Martin pursued a strategy of what I call in my writing "liberal integrationism" – that is, campaigning for the abolition of legal Jim Crow and the expansion of democratic rights to include African-Americans. But by early 1966, King recognized the limitations of his strategy and began to talk about the necessity for fundamental change in the American economic system.

Martin's death was important in my own life because I was 17 years old at the time, I was a high school senior, and I had a newspaper column that I wrote called "Youth Speaks Out" that appeared in the weekly newspaper in Dayton, Ohio. My mother suggested that it would be a good idea for me to fly to Atlanta to cover the funeral. The experience of attending King's funeral had a profound impact on my life. I already had a deep passion for history, but I also made a real commitment to the politics of social change. Because Martin died standing up for oppressed people and fighting for freedom.

You didn't have to agree with Martin in his strategy or his philosophy of nonviolent direct action, but one had to admire the courage that it took to live that kind of committed life, and to be prepared to die to realize your objectives. It's the same kind of courage that Medgar Evers had, that Ella Baker had, Fannie Lou Hamer had. They may express their politics through different ideological hues and approaches to the construction of tactics and strategies to affect change. Nevertheless, despite those differences, the common glue that binds them together is a love and a commitment to freedom for oppressed people.

The Poor People's March was organized by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The march arrived in Washington DC in May 1968.

You have called black Americans the "orphans of American democracy." Your work has explored issues that arise around what it means to live as an "orphan" in the United States. I'm wondering how 1968 and Martin Luther King's assassination represents a turning point between black Americans and the larger polity?

To grapple with this we have to go back to the summer of 66, when Stokely Carmichael began to call for Black Power during the James Meredith March in Mississippi. There was a debate in the movement over whether or not whites should withdraw from the movement and go back to the white community and pursue antiracist strategies with whites. Should African-Americans develop all-black institutions and essentially carry out a nationalist-oriented approach toward capacity building within the black community; that is, all-black institutions, black leadership, community-controlled schools, etcetera? What should the attitude of the Black Freedom Struggle be toward the Vietnam War? Was there a link between international issues and domestic issues, as Malcolm X had said and [African-American sociologist W.E.B.] Du Bois (1868-1963) had argued?

All of these debates crystallized around the development of new formations that had a radically different orientation from older organizations like the NAACP, the National Urban League, and even younger groups like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. These older civil rights formations were concerned with social reform within the existing framework of the American political economy of capitalism. The new formations that erupted after the dawn of Black Power were talking about basic change, institutionally, across the board within the United States.

Many African-American women were active in radical Black Power politics during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Some Black Power groups were explicitly Marxist and socialist, others were not. But what they had in common was a rejection of structural racism root and branch, and they demanded black representation that would be roughly equal to the size of the black population in the country within existing institutions.

Some Black Power groups were explicitly Marxist and socialist, others were not. But what they had in common was a rejection of structural racism root and branch, and they demanded black representation that would be roughly equal to the size of the black population in the country within existing institutions. In other words, the way we put it as high school kids: "we wanted a black face in a high place." We wanted somebody who looked like us in positions of authority. And we protested to achieve black faces in high places. What I today in my writing call "symbolic representation."

Unfortunately, symbolic representation became a terrible trap. Not just for blacks, but for feminists, for lesbians and gays, for Latinos, for Native Americans. Because, if you simply demand that the system accommodate you by having people who are your gender, or your race, or ethnicity, or sexuality, it doesn't say anything about their politics. It just says they share that aspect of identity with you. And so identity politics forty years ago was, I suppose, an advance over what had occurred before, which was white men in charge. But we didn't realize the limitations of race identity politics at that time would lead us to Clarence Thomas, or Condoleezza Rice – the face of imperialism.

1968 was a pivotal moment because all of these ideological debates occurred and new formations emerged. In October 66 the Black Panther Party formed in an anti-poverty office in Oakland, California. In 68 you get the emergence of what I feel is far more important than the Black Panther Party, which is the whole phenomenon of revolutionaries and black Marxists and black radicals in Detroit's auto industry forming DRUM (the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement), FRUM (the Ford Revolutionary Union Movement), the Eldon Avenue Revolutionary Union Movement, which came together in 1969 to form the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. By the end of 1969, the League became a coalition of about 23 revolutionary black workers collectives around the country. Which is an extraordinary event, and really an understudied event, primarily because of its radical character. There were other formations that ideologically I don't agree with, but nevertheless need to be noted. Probably the most prominent was in the US. Maulana Karenga, who had at one point been Ron Everett, formed an organization on the West Coast in Los Angeles based around his Kawaida theory of social change, which was grounded in cultural nationalism.

There are these new cultural and ideological and political forms that are all over in 1968. There's a presidential election that's occurring, and there is an African-American candidate in the race: Charlie Mitchell, the first black presidential candidate of the CPUSA [Communist Party of the USA] fielded. But other than minor party candidates, African-Americans did follow the presidential election. It was significant to us because it was the first time in US history where the major-

Right: Martin Luther King Jr. (far right) on his last march, during the Memphis sanitation workers' strike, March 1968.
Below: Ella Baker, a leading civil rights and human rights activist, first began organizing in the 1930s.

ity of black adults nationwide voted in a presidential election. And that's because we weren't allowed to before that time.

As a person who was 18 years old, involved in antiwar activity, and also a journalism student, it was quite a remarkable moment. It forced everyday folk to see politics differently, because the extremes were not abstract. They were real, in front of them. There were, you know, hundreds of people dying in Vietnam everyday. There was popular resistance on the ground, by everyday folk, about "What are the politics of imperialism?" "What are the politics of organizing?"

Your undergraduate and graduate years occurred during 1968-1976, the precise years you have called the "high point of nationalism and radical consciousness." I'm wondering how 1968 goes on to shape the politics of the 70s, and I'm interested in the links that you see between being a student in those formative years, the black convention movement and the politics of 68.

In 68, you have this fundamental contradiction for black Americans. It's the first time in US history that the majority of us actually can vote in a Presidential election. But what are we voting for? We have three major candidates. Hubert Humphrey, representing the Democrats, who doesn't win any primaries but is hoisted as the national nominee from party leaders in smoke-filled rooms. You have Nixon, representing the Republicans, who is the only Presidential candidate who endorses Black Power – but he redefines it as black capitalism. And there is a right wing in the black movement that embraces and endorses Nixon. Then there's a third movement of American reaction, almost fascism, that is expressed by George Wallace. It was a very narrow victory for Nixon. And so, we were faced with a right wing regime that had absolutely no commitment of leaving Vietnam despite his promises to the contrary.

For African Americans to bear witness to the 68 election, to vote in that election, we realized we had nothing to vote for. It was unbelievably bittersweet. So many of us said: what we need is a black political party that represents African-American issues and interests, independent of the Democrats and the Republicans. Those of us who thought about it more deeply said we need a pre-party formation. We're not prepared to launch a party. We don't have the infrastructure, the resources. But a pre-party formation. Let's build it upon the historic black convention movement that began at Bethel AME church of Richard Allen in Philadelphia in September 1830, when blacks in the north discussed strategies for liberating sisters and brothers who were enslaved in the south and talked about practical ways to enhance and improve the quality of life for free blacks in northern cities.

A group of us black activists said, "Let's revive the convention movement. And let's have a convention in Gary, Indiana calling for the creation of a pre-party formation." The masses of people would come out, and we would discuss popular issues that impact people, and we would try through workshops to frame a people's agenda. Then we would interrogate candidates for public office on their sup-

That's a legacy of 68. Because 68 generated a generation of black radicals who were convinced that black politics should be anti-capitalist and anti-racist.

port for the people's agenda, and throw these politicians in front of the masses in a school gymnasium, and vote them up or vote them down. And our task as organizers was to go with the person the masses wanted.

It was kind of rudimentary, straight-up grassroots, populist politics. Deeply egalitarian, but crude. But its heart was in the right place. So in 72, about 8,500 people showed up at Gary. They embraced what in my mind is one of the most visionary and radical documents that black people have ever produced: the Gary Agenda. The preamble says that America is built on the twin evils of white racism and capitalism and that the task of the Black Freedom Struggle is to destroy both. So it commits to a black politics that is explicitly anti-racist and anti-capitalist. We have retreated a long way from that. But that's what thousands of black people embraced in 1972.

That's a legacy of 68. Because 68 generated a generation of black radicals who were convinced that black politics should be anti-capitalist and anti-racist. We were using electoral forms for the purposes of empowering black folk against a racist, capitalist state. So we were involved in reformist politics but for revolutionary purposes, or so we thought. All of us were in our 20s, or early 30s, which became one of the problems in the movement. Because of McCarthyism, we had been disconnected from a generation of people who were much wiser than we were, who had had a wealth of experience in doing political organizing who came out of the labor movement in the 30s and the 40s. There was also a disconnect between us and the people who had been in the CPUSA. For all of its contradictions, people in the Party had enormous strengths and could have provided real support and helpful insights that we could have used to our benefit. But we did not. In part because we were cut away from any kind of personal and ideological kinship. Thanks to McCarthyism in the 1950s, that became obliterated for our generation.

One of the biggest debates on the legacy of Black Power revolves around when the Movement ended. Despite the fact that the currents of 1968 and Black Power endure in lives such as yours, in various intellectual and political work of activists and scholars, how can we think about Black Power's decline, and where might we see its legacy today?

When [former U.S. President Ronald] Reagan won the presidential election in November 1980, he ushered in a thoroughly reactionary regime. There was a response by the black middle class that I did not fully anticipate: a series of radical reforms, challenges to Reaganism that assumed mostly electoral forms. The three most important protests were linked to Harold Washington's victory in Chicago as mayor; the [Jesse] Jackson Campaign [for president] in 84, which was much more progressive then the one of 88; and in late 84 the anti-apartheid movement, which was civil disobedience. Over 100,000 people went to jail across the country. Thousands of businesses were picketed and hundreds of schools were shut down, calling for divestment from apartheid South Africa. Ultimately that led to the international sanctions, and US sanctions, and an end to Reagan's so-called "constructive engagement" policy with South Africa. So there was a period that flowed out of the politics of 1980 that actually revived a kind of political engagement against the Right in the mid-eighties. But that did not last.

In the United States, racism and race have been so central to blocking the awareness of millions of white Americans to understand their own class interests. That has been central to the failure of radical social change in this country for nearly 400 years. African-Americans have consistently fought for the idea of America free from structural racism, and a politics that speaks to the material conditions that people live in daily life, regardless of the color of their skin.

That is a politics I have also pursued. The possibility of moving beyond where we are electorally, toward a politics in which corporate capitalism is seriously examined. Where questions of what people should have a right to expect, both as citizens and human beings in this polity, where those kinds of questions can be discussed. Where Robin Kelley's Freedom Dreams could be placed on the national table. All of that seems possible. But it will only happen if we open the door a bit to the possibility of a different kind of political discussion.

I believe it's going to happen. And that will allow us to raise questions that socialists and Marxists have raised for a long time about the ways in which people who do the work and create value in society can benefit from that value. That health care should be a fundamental human right. That black men die seven years earlier than white males in this country. That in Harlem, life expectancy is 49, lower than in Bangladesh. Those kinds of questions can be pursued under Obama. It won't be the revolution but it will be an environment where politically engaged people will be able to function without the heavy hand of state repression on them. And it will be an opportunity to do more to achieve the values that we hold. ★

Recommended Reading

Manning Marable, R*ace, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-2006.*

Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination.*

Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America.*

INTERVIEW

Palestine Struggle at the Crossroads

The Palestinian national liberation struggle is at a crossroads – the Oslo process, clearly designed to cement the Israeli Apartheid system – has yielded devastating results. The leading Palestinian nationalist party, Fatah, is implicated in the failing negotiations, while Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Party, managed to win the elections on a rejection vote of Fatah and the failings of Oslo. In this situation, the role of the Palestinian left has been confused. As the Islamist movement gains strength, the Left is losing more ground and entrenching itself further in the NGO (non-governmental organizations) sector.

Below **Rafeef Ziadah** interviews **Issam Al-Yamani** who provides an historical appraisal of one of Palestine's leading left groups, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PLFP), and describes the dramatic changes that took place in the Middle East during the 1960s and 70s.

How did the early formation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) take place?

In 1964 the Arab League met in Cairo and discussed the formation of a Palestinian organization to represent the interests of the Palestinian people. At the time they assigned Ahmad Shukairi to come up with a proposal on how to establish such an organization within three months. Shukairi was well known as a Palestinian patriot before the Nakba of 1948 and was former ambassador of Syria and Saudi Arabia at the UN [United Nations]. *[Nakba means disaster and is the Palestinian term for the expulsion from their homes of thousands of Palestinians when the Israeli state was established in 1948-ed.]*

Questions of control over the PLO quickly arose between the Nasser front – supporters of Egyptian president Gamal Abdul Nasser who backed a vision of Arab nationalism – and the Saudi front.

In October 1964 the first Palestinian National Congress (PNC) was convened in Jerusalem – then under Jordanian control. Representatives from Palestinian political parties such as the Baath Party (its Palestinian, Syrian and Iraqi wings), the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM, the Palestinian section of which later developed to be the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine), unions and businessmen were present. Also, prominent refugees who were well known prior to the Nakba were chosen to be representatives at the PNC as well.

The logo of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine symbolizes the return home of Palestinian refugees.

At this initial meeting the national program was set, the Palestinian Liberation Army was established and the Palestinian National Fund. The army came under the control of each state it existed within. Shukiri was elected head of the PLO and given observes status at the Arab League.

After the initial formation, the PLO underwent a major transition to become more independent of the Arab League – how did this take place?

In addition to the PLO, Palestinians had since 1948 began to form underground groups and guerrilla branches. The Arab Nationalist Movement came with the suggestion to Shukairi that the PLO finance guerrilla operations taking place under the banner of "Heroes of Return." Shukairi essentially said he would finance the operations, but they would stay under the control of the ANM. The PLO would endorse the operations and this line of work if it goes well, but would condemn it if it failed.

The PLO generally allied itself with the Egyptian leader Nasser but 1967 was a major transition when Egypt was defeated in the 1967 war. Then the PLO emerged as an alternative to the Arab regimes and armed resistance tactics and "fedayee (freedom fighter) operations" were quickly becoming the norm and rallying the masses. People had lost faith in regimes and started to believe more strongly in the Fatah option of relying on oneself and using armed struggle as the sole means for liberating Palestine.

The shifts in Palestinian politics were starting to develop before 1967, but the war really made the differences very stark for Palestinians. The Arab Nationalist Movement (with branches all across the Arab world) developed a Palestinian wing in 1962, but had allied themselves with Nasser. So when the defeat of 1967 came, it had ramifications for them, internally causing a crisis and debate about the future direction of Arab nationalism. Fatah on the other hand had managed to

Issam Al-Yamani is a long-time Palestinian activist and former cadre of the PFLP.
Rafeef Ziadah is a third generation Palestinian refugee and activist with the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA).

be seen as an independent body that had no relation to the defeat. They also had a political line of not interfering in Arab regimes and keeping the focus on Palestine. The ANM has the fight against reactionary Arab regimes as one of its basic principles, believing that without Arab unity the Palestinian people cannot be liberated and that change was needed in the entire Arab world for change to occur in Palestine.

So for the Palestinian masses, though the ANM were the first to begin guerrilla operations, they were too connected to the defeat of Nasser and had Arab unity, rather than strictly Palestine, as their basis. Between 1965 and 1967 Fatah grew inside the refugee camps. It led the armed struggle and became the largest Palestinian party. When the next elections for the PLO took place, Fatah took the largest number of seats and Arafat was elected head.

How did the different factions of the Palestinian National Movement differ ideologically?

Fatah purposely lacked an ideology, it saw the liberation of Palestine as the only point to its existence. As such it attracted activists from the Baath party, Nasserites, Muslim Brotherhood, but also accommodated a large number of rich Palestinians who had extensive influence inside the organization. Fatah, because it was not in the Nasser camp, also had major support from the Saudi camp.

The Arab Nationalist Movement underwent an intense debate after the defeat of Nasser, and its Palestinian wing was embroiled in a debate about Marxism as well. The debate initially started in 1964 and continued on until the formation of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in 1968. The argument from the Marxist wing was that the organization cannot depend solely on nationalism for the liberation of Palestine, but had to work on organizing the working classes and peasantry across the Arab world. Much of this debate was inspired by the international wave of left politics that was sweeping across the Arab world at the time. Also, Cuba was a major catalyst for the transition of the ANM to the PFLP because it showed that there did not have to be a conflict between national liberation and Marxism. The PFLP was mainly influenced by Maoism because of the idea of a mass base of peasants (more similar to Palestinians than the classical definition of working class).

But even the newly formed PFLP could not shake off the association of the Arab Nationalist Movement to Nasser and the defeat of 1967. Also, the adoption of Marxism made it difficult for Palestinian masses to readily join the organization because the ideology was complex, whereas Fatah didn't really ask anything of its members except to fight for Palestine.

Within the PLO, quotas were set up for each faction and Fatah tried its best to secure the most quotas over all other factions. For example, Fatah bribed the leadership of the unions which were the traditional base of the Arab Nationalist Movement or otherwise formed their own separate unions. Slowly the two wings – the nationalist Fatah and left PFLP – became embroiled in rival campaigns of institution-building. The PFLP would quickly lose that battle because it did not have the funding from Saudi Arabia and the Palestinian capitalist class that was emerging in the Gulf. For example the PFLP struggled against the monarchy in Jordan, took a stand against Saddam's killing of communists in Iraq – those types of stands cost it funding.

The historical goal of the PLO was for a one state solution and the right of return for Palestinian refugees, but this is a little known fact nowadays and most people think the two-state solution has always been what Palestinians have been seeking. Can you tell us about how this transition from calling for a one state to two state occurred?

Yes, most people date the acceptance of a two-state solution to the Oslo peace process, however the PLO leadership started making moves in that direction back in 1974. Unfortunately it was a left faction within the PLO – the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine [DFLP] – that opened up the doors for

a two state solution to be discussed. The DFLP put forward a "transitional program" that said we need to liberate even a small section of Palestine and then work towards full liberation. Fatah saw this as a major opening and produced the famous Declaration of 10 points that stated that the liberation of a small part of Palestine is acceptable as a transitional demand. The PFLP rejected this plan, considering it capitulation to Zionist and imperialist demands and an implicit acceptance of resolutions 242 and 338 that divided up Palestine into two states. This caused a major rift in the PLO with the PFLP forming the rejectionist front to combat the trend towards a two state solution.

From that point forward the PLO leadership, now fully controlled by Fatah kept making attempts at a short term solution until reaching Oslo.

AMERICAN MUSLIMS FOR PALESTINE

Palestinian refugees are one of the largest displaced populations in the world. Two out of every five refugees today are Palestinian.

The Palestinian left was not able to mount opposition to the signing of the Oslo agreements, though they rejected it? What were the causes for rejection?

After the fall of the Soviet Union (a major backer for the Palestinian left) and after the Gulf war with the sweeping US victory, there was a new US plan for the region that involved "settling the Palestinian problem." First the PLO went into the Madrid talks with Israel. Those lasted for one year and were led by Haidar Abdul Shafi. He then declined and said that he cannot proceed while the settlements continued to be built – it was mute to negotiate over land while Israel continued to steal more of it for settlement construction. At the time the PLO was not directly involved, Israel requested that there be no PLO leadership direct involvement and that all negotiators be from the West Bank.

It was clear the Madrid talks were going nowhere and there was a change in Israel with a new Labour Party government headed by Rabin. Secret meetings began to happen between the PLO and Israel. It was those talks that ended up with Oslo. Israel recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and signed the Oslo principles; this included the acceptance of UN resolutions 242 and 338 and gave five years for Israel to leave the occupied territories starting with Gaza and Jericho. The Oslo accords called for Palestinian elections – the Palestinian Authority [PA] was created – and an economic agreement was signed in Paris between both sides.

The PFLP responded to this by leaving the executive committee of the PLO. It was clear that 78 percent of historic Palestine was given up and there was no clear resolutions on issues of water, refugees, borders; and settlement construction was continuing. It was clear Palestinians didn't have negotiating power and were accepting all Israeli dictates. PFLP formed a rejectionist front with other Palestinian factions to oppose Oslo (factions included Hamas and Islamic Jihad). The PFLP did not run for elections or join the Palestinian Authority (this stance was changed later after Oslo became a reality on the ground). Some PFLP leaders did return to the West Bank after Oslo, but were clear that return after Oslo does not mean an acceptance of it.

On the popular level, after the Gulf War and fall of the Soviet Union, the masses were hopeful that Oslo would yield results. Also, there was some economic return from Oslo with Palestinian capital returning from the Gulf. After its return, the PLO leadership voted to change the Palestinian national declaration of principles to give up armed struggle as a means of liberating Palestine. The PFLP voted against this, but lost the vote. This has to be put in context though; the PLO had been corrupted for decades before Oslo came. Arafat was signing up "independents" to fill the independent quotas within the PLO and stacking meetings with Fatah members. The influence of Gulf money on the PLO was very

It was clear Palestinians didn't have negotiating power and were accepting all Israeli dictates. The PFLP formed a rejectionist front with other Palestinian factions including Hamas and Islamic Jihad to oppose Oslo.

acute. Also, Fatah placed itself in control of PLO finances. For a people in exile this was a very corruptive measure.

Many think that the second Palestinian Intifada was the rejection of the Oslo process, what changed in the internal dynamics of the PLO and Palestinian factions with the second Intifada?

In 2000 the Intifada started when it became clear that Arafat could not sign the final deal offered by the Israelis and the Americans. In the view of the PFLP, Arafat actually took a stand and made sure the negotiations failed. The PFLP began to see Oslo as a reality and, from within its cadre in the West Bank, there was pressure to join the PA institutions and run in municipal elections. Activists saw that they could have a measure of influence in changing these institutions and wanted to fight the corruption and fight for accountability from within. But this was a fierce debate within the PFLP because the traditional cadre saw this as a form of acceptance of Oslo since these institutions were set up as Apartheid apparatus to control the population. They were not set up for democratic control.

Unfortunately during Oslo, the Palestinian left and PFLP in particular were in crisis and could not respond. There was a money crisis with the fall of the Soviet Union and other Arab regimes ending their funding. There was also the phenomenon of non-governmental organizations that swallowed up most of the activists of the first Intifada. Those NGO's were not sites of political organizing, rather they were channeling the political organizing into service provision and were of course under funding restrictions by foreign donors. These changes during Oslo made it difficult for the left to respond and made it difficult to revive the mass base that existed during the first Intifada.

After September 11, of course, things became even harder for the PFLP when it was added to the terrorism list in North America. Its cadre was targeted and their operations – which through the 70s and 80s were the pillars of international solidarity with Palestine in the west – were severely weakened. So essentially the PFLP, one of the only left groups that was clearly rejecting Oslo, came under siege internationally. The PLO itself was now fully led by a comprador bourgeoisie that had gone down the path of Oslo, but could not finish it and had not built a plan B to combat it.

What are important lessons you think can be learned from the experience of the PFLP within the PLO?

An important factor is that ideology; specifically Marxism cannot and should not be treated like dogma. The PFLP adopted Marxism without making it relevant to the mass of Palestinians – so initially Fatah was able to capture and build its reputation on a simple idea of "fighting for Palestine." But Marxism is not a ready-made ideology to just be transplanted; it's a tool to be used in analyzing different situations. The religion question for example was very important in the context of the Middle East. It was an Islamic society the PFLP was operating in. There had to be respect for cultural traditions. Just a blanket rejection of God does not work; the left cannot impose its own rules and laws onto the society without changing the material conditions that cause people to uphold religion so strongly.

An important factor is that ideology, specifically Marxism, cannot and should not be treated like dogma.

But we also should not underestimate the material conditions working against the PFLP. We had a revolution led by a bourgeoisie that relied heavily on Gulf money and worked to corrupt the revolution. Not to say that part of this corruption didn't reach the PFLP as well, but it was to a much lesser degree. The PFLP unfortunately spent a lot of energy competing with Fatah over service provision, instead of focusing on their own strategy and building their own base.

How do you see the situation today?

Nowadays we cannot ignore the strong neoliberal current pushing its way through the occupied territories led by the Palestinian Authority. The PA is proposing to cut workers pay, cut subsides on goods. This coincides with the corrupt PA leadership that has permitted itself sole distributor status over certain goods. For example, Ahmad Qreia (prominent PLO leader and Oslo supporter) has 246 products for which he is the sole distributor. Abu Mazen's children have the major advertising company in the West Bank for most products. The current PA is led by technocrats that do not have the liberation of Palestine as their goal. As a matter of fact, they are the major beneficiaries of Oslo and thus are refusing to let it go even when it's clear the negotiations are going nowhere. That is why the campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) is a clear way to combat this trend towards normalization with Apartheid Israel.

It is not just the national struggle in Palestine, but also the class struggle that is heating up. The left unfortunately (like the left internationally) is embroiled in sectarian divides over matters of leadership. The Palestinian people though are looking for an alternative. Hamas is not offering a long-term plan and the PA is offering never-ending negotiations as Israel continues to confiscate land. So the time is truly ripe for a left alternative to rise with its basis being anti-normalization and BDS. ★

[Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions – initiated in 2005 on the basis of a call-out by over 170 Palestinian grassroots organizations - is an international campaign that has been gaining momentum in the past few years. To find out more about the campaign here in Canada, visit the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid at www.caiaweb.org-ed]

PAN-AFRICANISM AND NATIONAL LIBERATION

At the hub of global solidarity

BY PABLO IDAHOSA

Forty years on, 1968 would appear to be a genuine historical watershed. Numerous world events exploded and fused into what seems to be, in retrospect, a part of something seamlessly global in significance. While no doubt 1968 augured many things for Africa, it did not always seem to be the spark for rebellion, let alone revolution, that one might have wanted it to be.

To be sure, there were specific events that took on the inflection of, as someone once put it, the 20th century's most political year. Vietnam on the one side and the invasion of Czechoslovakia on the other provided, in so many contradictory ways, a Third Worldist solidarity, a non-aligned way of avoiding what Washington or Moscow prescribed. This was true even where African states continued to enjoy the benefits of partially aligning themselves to one superpower, while exploiting the tension between both. In the context of this Third World solidarity, students developed a conception of imperialism that also critiqued their own ruling classes.

Emerging Activism

The events in Paris had intellectual resonance, and in some instances inspired practical demonstrations of solidarity. In Egypt for example, there were student demonstrations. Students, especially those who had studied in Paris and had read Mao, Althusser and Marcuse, among others, were excited by the possibility of an alliance with workers. In Dakar, there were demonstrations against the Senghor government by students and in favour of workers and peasants, with some reciprocal action by workers and trade unionists.

All of these protests were expressions of deeply linked global processes of capitalist accumulation and reproduction.

In Cape Town and other parts of apartheid South Africa, white students on the left along with others of a more liberal inclination were influenced by the events in Paris, by the assassination of Martin Luther King (and for other reasons, Robert Kennedy), and by the message of racial equality, civil rights and civil disobedience. At the same time, Steve Biko, who would emerge as a key leader of the Black Consciousness Movement, was absorbing and synthesizing Pan-Africanism. Biko, along with his wife and collaborator Ntsiki Mashalaba, developed a message of black power and black consciousness as an indigenous, black African movement towards liberation in the face of then-S.A. president Vorster's Apartheid regime.

Each of the African mobilizations also had its local inspiration. In Egypt, it was the humiliating "Six-Day War" against Israel that highlighted the emerging failures of President Nasser's state capitalist regime. This was combined with wider political repression that would presage similar developments in other parts of Africa and the Middle East. In the case of Senegal, the students revolted against naked French neo-colonial economic and educational policies while feeding off grievances of both workers and peasants, the latter of whom had seen producer prices fall by 15 percent in the space of a year. The South African Apartheid example speaks for itself.

Pessimism

All of these protests were expressions of deeply linked global processes of capitalist accumulation and reproduction. They were expressed through local responses to specific forms of exploitation and repression. They also arose from broader African conditions, speaking to the failure of, or at the very least the pessimism about, nationalism and development as the twin pivots of Africa's modernity. Having recently emerged from colonialism

VOICES OF 68

Always bear in mind that people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone's head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children.

Amílcar Cabral., liberation leader in Guinea Bissau and Capo Verde

Pablo Idahosa is the Program Coordinator of African Studies at York University in Toronto.

to national independence, many African countries were exposed to a combination of failed leadership and imperialist ambition. These realities thwarted moves towards addressing the needs of ordinary people across so many countries on the continent. Increasingly, other forms of conflict and class self-interest in the name of nationalism became the norm.

In the two years preceding 1968, a number of military coups had taken place in West Africa, including the imperialist-sponsored putsch against the radical nationalist and pan-Africanist Kwame Nkrumah, just nine years into Ghana's independence. 1968 was two years after the coup in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, that augured the bloodiest civil war in Africa beginning in 1969. With over a million people killed, this civil war laid open the terrible example of the "pitfalls of national consciousness," to use the theorist Franz Fanon's memorable phrase.

Liberation in Southern Africa

The same time period, however, also saw the pronouncement of the Arusha Declaration by the social democratically inspired President Nyerere of Tanzania (1967). This was the declaration of a so-called indigenous (and ultimately failed) form of non-capitalist development. This non-marxist form of socialism, along with the liberation struggles in Southern Africa, inspired a generation of activists across Africa and throughout the world. Anti-imperialist activists were inspired to engage in lively debates and activism in support of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, other Southern African liberation struggles in Zimbabwe and Namibia, and those across the Portuguese colonies in Africa. Dar el Salaam, in Tanzania, was one of the local launching pads for these struggles.

In 1968 Amílcar Cabral in Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde, and Eduardo Modlane in Mozambique, two of the more innovative nationalists and socialists, each made important declarations about the revolutionary content of their socialism. Both set out key ideas about the role of socialism, its leadership and its popular legitimacy rooted in the everyday experiences of the people. These were developed through a carefully engaged and empathetic scrutiny of people's own expressions of their everyday needs. They also emphasized the need for cultural renewal, a "return to the source" for Africans that went beyond national integration. These went along with Biko's later interventions for an end to "mental slavery" under colonial domination.

Cabral and Modlane based their approach upon a foundation of struggle that was a response to narrow nationalism and authoritarian forms of socialism that influenced the first wave of independence struggle in the late 1950s and early 1960s. They revived the spirit of national liberation and Pan-Africanism that had been lost to the ravages of imperialism and local petty bourgeois class collaboration and/or self-interest. Although their views were often hidden from the horizons of mainstream nationalism, they would eventually come to embody the renewal of the claims of national liberation and the revival of radical politics in various parts of the continent and beyond.

This radical revival, along with the new reception of the theories of Franz Fanon, would galvanize a generation of global activists, some of whom directly and indirectly participated in these struggles – as observers, translators, teachers, and as informational conduits to the wider world, especially the advanced capitalist countries. One of the legacies of the 1960s was an age of international solidarity and the critique of narrow nationalism.

International Solidarity

In Africa, 1968 was a signal year for a longer period of change that was genuinely global in scope. Today, much of this legacy might appear to be lost in the detritus of being the weak link in the chain of globalizing neo-liberal capitalism. Right now, it might seem difficult, even impossible, to imagine the African contribution to the heritage of the 1960s.

We are living now in an age when there is so much talk of an exhausted or failed nationalism, where much of Africa is part of the new pact with imperialism and securitization in the wake of 9/11, and when there is actually a growth in sectors of the African ruling classes because of the resource rents derived from the expansion of China's rapacious state capitalism. This is an age where to have commitments beyond borders is often equated with humanitarian interventionism or the opening up of an NGO.

It is crucial to remember that in the 1960s Africa was at the hub of international solidarity. This adds an important dimension to the contested heritage of the 1968 and beyond. Most important is the need for Africans to rethink, critique and reexpropriate the radicalization of African politics itself. ★

WWW.ALICIAPATTERSON.ORG/../WRIGHT02.JPG

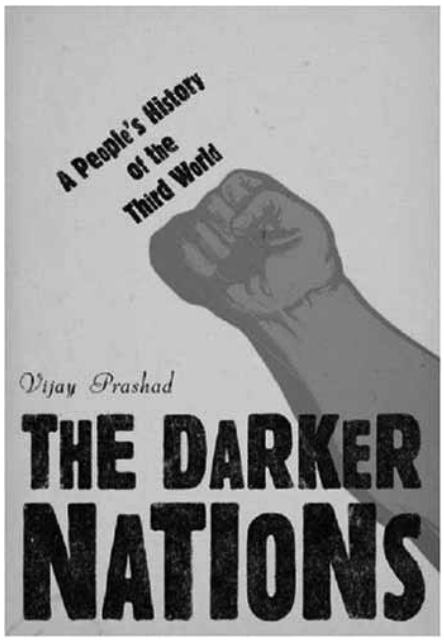
The revived radicalism signalled in 1968 led to the defeat of Portuguese colonialism in Mozambique.

BOOK REVIEW

Dismantling the Third World

The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World
by Vijay Prashad
The New Press

Reviewed by Salim Vally and Cynthia Wright



In his expansive new book *The Darker Nations* (2007), Vijay Prashad sets out to produce an accessible and critical-historical account of the Third World "project." Covering the period roughly from 1928 to the dawn of the new millennium, the book casts a critical but appreciative eye on a project initially seen as secular and generally progressive, born out of momentous popular mobilizations against colonialism, but gradually unravelling and going awry. A US-based academic and frequent contributor to left-wing journals, Prashad has written several books: the best known are probably *The Karma of Brown Folk* and *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity*.

The focus of *The Darker Nations* on the "giants of the movement" (among them Nehru, Nasser and Castro) has consequences for the history he tells: it tends to centre largely on masculine elites, although it is certainly not an uncritical hagiography of these leaders. The book also looks at what Prashad argues was the main institutional vehicle through which the Third World leadership attempted to address the world and fight for its demands: the United Nations. But, again, Prashad does not confine his analysis to that arena and he is well aware of the past and present political limitations of the UN. As he puts it, "While this book will frequently use the words of leaders and institutions, it does not rely on them for its sense of the imagination and capacity of the Third World."

Drawing extensively on the most up-to-date secondary literature, *The Darker Nations* impressively combines a sympathetic understanding of the power and audacity of the Third World project and its inspirations while also maintaining a clear-eyed perspective on the project's internal contradictions, terrible failures and crushing defeats. The book is a weapon against historical amnesia and the ideological forces that seek to erase the Third World critique and substitute for it "humanitarian" imperialism. As Kristin Ross, author of *May '68 and its Afterlives*, sardonically comments of these perspectives: "The time for political action or analyses, it seems, is now past; we can do nothing but aid the victims of human and natural disaster."

But Prashad also avoids the dangers of revolutionary nostalgia. He is quite clear that the Third World project is at an end and desperately in need of radical re-thinking: "…the new nations neither reorganized social relations effectively nor disrupted the colonial-type state structure bequeathed to it …. Military rule or military force became the order of the day, as the Third World regimes drove their demobilized populations to do what they envisioned." In many ways, Frantz Fanon's anti-colonial classic, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), functions as the shadow text to *The Darker Nations*. In particular, the book's remarkably prescient chapter, "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness," provides a key framework for understanding how and why the Third World project went wrong.

Before anatomizing the pitfalls, however, Prashad first elaborates a sense of the formation and key aspirations of the Third World project. Thus, Part 1 or "Quest," narrates the origins of the Third World political project through the history of iconic conferences including "the 1928 League against Imperialism" in Brussels; Bandung, "the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference"; the Tricontinental in Havana (1966) – and the far less well-known 1961 Afro-Asian Women's Conference in Cairo.

Project and Place

The opening words of *The Darker Nations* are "The Third World was not a place. It was a project." At the same time, Prashad locates the project within the tricontinental context of Asia, Africa (including the Middle East) and Latin America/Caribbean. He doesn't discuss the complex ways in which the Third

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World political project was taken up by North American people of colour (including by indigenous people who elaborated a concept of the "Fourth World") – or how Third World perspectives shaped Black (African, Asian, Caribbean) politics in the UK and African/Arab resistance in the Parisian banlieues.

Prashad does acknowledge the role that European cities such as Paris and Brussels played as sites in the development of the Third World project, with their restless populations of (largely male) Third World migrant workers, political exiles, students and former soldiers. Indeed, as Robert Young argues in *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, "tricontinental anti-colonialism" was very much "a diasporic production" in part because intense levels of colonial repression often meant that the metropolitan cities became sites where anti-colonial intellectuals from all over the globe were able to meet and produce theory and political strategy together. As the African-American communist Paul Robeson said, "I discovered Africa in London."

The Darker Nations is organized thematically with chapter titles of cities where major events related to each theme occurred. It is a creative, interesting approach to the problem of finding a form equal to the argument, breadth and historical sweep of *The Darker Nations*. At the same time, the cities largely function as background in the narrative. The complex histories of many of these cities as colonial spaces organized through deep "racial" divides does not occupy Prashad here; nor does he look at how many postcolonial elites "aggressively adapted the racial zoning of the colonial period to defend their own class privileges and spatial exclusivity," as Mike Davis puts it in his book, *Planet of Slums* (2006).

Cultivating Diversity

What then was the political project of the Third World? What sort of solidarities did it create? First, and crucially, Prashad does not understand Third World unity as pre-given from the common experience of racism and colonialism/imperialism. It needed to be a conscious act of political construction (first as Afro-Asian unity, then as a tricontinental project including Latin America) – but it also had fissures from the start. Prashad describes the content of the political project in slightly different but overlapping terms in various chapters, but basically it consisted of several key elements: "disarmament, national sovereignty, economic integrity, and cultural diversity."

By "cultural diversity" Prashad refers to the centrality of cultural production within the anti-colonial project both to challenge European racism but also to create new solidarities, imaginaries and practices from the submerged history of colonized peoples. This highly influential and complex aspect of the Third World project receives perhaps the least attention in the book compared to the political and economic aspects of the core program. But it is a theme that is treated imaginatively in the chapter "Tehran," which considers, among other things, how cultural workers negotiated the production of new canons, cultural practices and cultural institutions.

Prashad spends less time on how the Third World project/imaginary was disseminated globally through media of startling power: films and newsreels (The Battle of Algiers with its famous scene of women revolutionaries); manifestos (Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* or Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism*); revolutionary radio; or iconic images of the period (any given photo or poster of Che or the Palestinian revolutionary, Leila Khaled).

NASIRIPHOTOS.COM

Female Fedayin Communist fighters train in the use of armed combat at Tehran University in Iran.

The Darker Nations does include several expected photographs, including images of Nehru, Nasser, Nkrumah, Ben Bella, Tito, Fidel and Indira Gandhi. Two evocative photographs, though, are not of leaders. One is captioned, "The Iranian Revolution – female Fedayin Communist fighters train in the use of armed combat at Teheran University." The other shows young women marching in Guinea-Bissau in 1974, and is captioned with a line from an essay by Amilcar Cabral, "No Fist Is Big Enough to Hide the Sky."

As these images suggest, the Third

It's no accident that Third World feminists would emerge in the 1980s as some of the toughest critics of post-colonial states.

World project was markedly gendered. While women had participated in many guerrilla wars and street demonstrations on all three continents, they were often not represented in the masculine Third World public sphere or the post-independence patriarchal states. This is not to say that the Third World project did not understand the centrality of the "woman question," for it did, as Prashad notes. The difficulty is that, in the end, the modernizing women's rights agenda and the national liberation framework were not equal to the problem of women's oppression. It's no accident that Third World feminists would emerge in the 1980s as some of the toughest critics of post-colonial states – even as women's organizations underwent bruising transitions under neoliberalism.

"Pitfalls"

The major problems with the political and economic frameworks of the Third World project are treated in Parts 2 and 3 of the book. "Pitfalls" (echoing Fanon's chapter on "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness") examines the mostly dismal record of Third World national liberation states in power. "Pitfalls" includes places and events that epitomize themes such as "the perils of an authoritarian state" (Algiers) and the tragic 1965 Indonesian blood bath of "one or perhaps two million Communists."

Prashad also examines in this section the deeply regressive consequences of the political demobilization of the population (and popular organizations) and the stifling of dissent after revolutionary victory. Indeed, while Prashad is careful not to attribute the failures of Third World states to a single cause, he does suggest that popular political demobilization is among the most important reasons for the failure of these regimes.

It should be added that Fanon was not the only critic with foresight. By the mid-60s, the celebrated Trinidadian Marxist C.L.R. James was already undertaking an unsparing critique of the independent states in the Caribbean. While Fanon was brutally critical of corrupt national elites, James's revolutionary internationalism would enable him to go further than Fanon to elaborate a powerful analysis of the entrapments of colonial modernity itself, including the nation-state form, a theme to which we will return.

"Assassinations" looks at the role of the IMF's structural adjustment policies, the rise of the so-called "Asian Tigers," and the fostering of cultural nationalisms and religious fundamentalisms which aimed to destroy the secular left nationalist project.

Prashad writes the obituary of the Third World project through the story of the 1983 meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Delhi. The NAM gathering coincided with the massacre of five thousand refugees in Nellie, Assam. Prashad quotes Tariq Ali's lament, "My Lai massacre multiplied by ten," adding, "When the NAM delegates arrived in Delhi, they saw pictures of the Nellie massacre in every major newspaper and magazine. It haunted the proceedings, and reminded most of the leadership of their own Nellies."

Reaction

Prashad suggests that, despite its weaknesses, the Third World project might nonetheless "have outlived its own pitfalls but for the frontal assault it faced in the 1970s." Neoliberalism and financial imperialism were central to that assault together with the Saudi-sponsored and US-inspired religious counter-offensive to Third World nationalism, secularism and socialism. In the book's last chapter, Prashad points out that this reaction was not limited to Muslim-majority countries. It also included the reinvention of tribalism and the atavistic ideas of the likes of Mobutu Sese Seko in the Congo, as well as the spread of an evangelical Christianity sponsored by the religious right in the US and Latin American to counter liberation theology within Latin America. Prashad is here arguing for a structural relationship between "the abandonment of the social transformation agenda" on the one hand, and the rise of pernicious cultural and religious nationalisms on the other.

Frantz Fanon (above) and C.L.R. James (right), early critics of the Third World project.

Riven by massive internal problems, encircled by debt, the final blow to "the darker nations" was the collapse of the USSR and the emergence of a new imperialism: "The United States as the leader of the Atlantic powers began to exercise its long-held project of primacy over the planet. The invasion of Panama (1989) was a dress rehearsal for the new epoch. It was followed by the war on Iraq, the dismemberment of Yugoslavia, and other displays of aerial bombardment." The US invasion of Grenada can be added to this list.

Prashad makes scattered references both to the contemporary Latin American experiments and to social movements which have developed precisely to contest what he calls "neoliberal states with national liberation values" But those wanting an in-depth analysis of these developments need to look elsewhere. Readers wanting to understand the failures and complexities of southern Africa, for example, would do well to consult John Saul's trilogy – *The Next Liberation Struggle*; *Development after Globalization*; and *Decolonization and Empire* – examining what he calls "the Thirty Years' War for southern African liberation" between 1960 and 1990 and the process of "recolonization" by capital.

While not totally pessimistic, Prashad sees "as yet little evidence of an alternative institutional agenda to replace the assassinated Third World project." But Prashad does not lose sight of the fact that most people in the world continue to live in terrible conditions of structural poverty and violence with little hope of liberation, and certainly not by their states: "People across the three continents continue to dream of something better, and many of them are organized into social movements or political parties. Their aspirations have a local voice. Beyond that, their hopes and dreams are unintelligible."

Notably, neither the experiments of Chavez, Morales and others in South America, nor the World Social Forums are mentioned, although he has said he will include that discussion in his sequel, *The Poorer Nations: A People's History of the Global South*. Perhaps Prashad will also tease out the implications of his arguments for what are often politically articulated as today's national liberation struggles, for example, the Palestinian struggle against Zionism.

Nation/Race

Indeed, Prashad's account of the trajectory of nationalism as a key component of the Third World project deserves careful consideration. He argues that, unlike European nationalisms organized through inherently racialized conceptions of "the people" – with each people entitled to a state – the Third World agenda was based on an "internationalist nationalism ... that looked outward to other anti-colonial nations as their fellows." Leaving aside the problem of whether there isn't in fact more traffic between European and Third World nationalisms than Prashad allows here, the fact is that Third World states were not immune to the reality of "race" and ethnic divides despite the heroic efforts of some liberation movements to transcend them. Prashad acknowledges as much when he writes, "Fanon overplays the lack of racism or the mobilization of biological notions in national liberation movements. National pride or patriotism often slid into the ugly language of racism or exclusion."

"People across the three continents continue to dream of something better … Their aspirations have a local voice. Beyond that, their hopes and dreams are unintelligible."

Vijay Prashad

States also did not hesitate to defend borders which had been drawn by the colonial powers thereby, as Prashad notes, succumbing to massive militarization and "the values of European ethno-nationalism." (His chapter on the 1962 Indo-Chinese border war is especially illustrative.) It will be interesting to see if Prashad's sequel addresses the prospects for a liberatory politics explicitly not anchored in borders and nationalism and the singular ethnic identities they produce, as well as the everyday violence against migrants they endorse and normalize. The terrible toll in human lives and the atrocities in African countries such as Rwanda, Burundi, the Congo, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Uganda also cannot be ignored, and the complicity of imperialism and multinational corporations in benefiting from these conflicts.

The Sequel

Prashad's sequel will also no doubt contend with the fact that, while the Third World project has disappeared, imperialism has not. Iraq – conjoining blood with lucre; military conquest with an undisguised theft of resources; and the violent production of singular religious and ethnic identities – is a stark reminder of US-led dispossession and capital accumulation. So too is the fact that "sixty states paid $550 billion in principle and interest on loans worth $540 billion. Yet they still owe $523 billion. The alchemy of international usury [continues to] bind the darker nations."

Prashad, correctly, is skeptical of the reform agenda of some countries of the global South, operating as they do within the rules set by IMF-driven globalization. He cites how South Africa, emerging from apartheid, pushed the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) – a neo-liberal program writ large for the continent. Still, the struggle continues. As Prashad concludes, "The limitations of IMF-driven globalization and revanchist traditionalism provoke mass movements across the planet. … It is from these many creative initiatives that a genuine agenda for the future will arise. When it does, the Third World will have found its successor."

Prashad's sequel, then, might capture this sentiment as reality and not a forlorn hope. But this requires our collective praxis. In the meantime, read this fine book, in order to prepare for ongoing battles. ★

ACID ROCK ... PSYCHEDELIA ... FOLK ... BLUES ... RADICALIZATION ... ART

Threads of a Musical Counterculture

by Jonathon Bakan

From the 1960s to the early 1970s, a whole range of new or radically renewed social movements emerged in North America and elsewhere, mobilizing and involving untold thousands especially youth. Movements against war and imperialism, movements against sexual oppression – the gay rights and feminist movements – militant anti-racist organizations and the beginnings of a radical environmentalist movement all emerged during these years, radically affecting the world view of an entire generation. The 1960s were years of deep radicalization, marked by a fluidity of ideas and a widespread openness to radicalism in all spheres of ideological endeavor.

Women's liberation was one of the many movements that grew out of the radicalization of the 1960s and 1970s.

The so-called counterculture was one expression of the radicalization of the 1960s. The counterculture was a body of alternative and oppositional expressive cultures, first based in the United States, that emerged to international attention by 1967. It was to have a profound and lasting impact on all aspects of popular culture.

The 60s counterculture was a widespread, youthful rejection of mainstream, middle-class values, ethics and lifestyles. It also encompassed protest movements against war, racism and repressive governments. Those who identified with the counterculture explicitly – and often consciously – challenged mainstream assumptions about property, family, drug use, sexuality and monogamy while protesting American neo-colonial power, imperialist war, racism and capitalist society more generally and simultaneously imagining a utopian future of peace, freedom, unfettered love and spiritual transcendence.

The radicalism of this movement had a profound effect on every aspect of culture. In music, as in every other area of discourse, the 1960s was a period of exploration, experimentation and fluidity. Boundaries between different popular musics, classical music, folk music, etc., became more porous as musicians attempted to find ways to express in sound the ideas that were embraced by the emerging counterculture. In classical music, jazz, rock, rhythm and blues and pop, musicians were making connections between radical politics and art.

In the 1960s, rock music – and especially the so-called acid rock or psychedelic rock that emerged between 1965 and 1967 – became a centrally-defining aspect of the counterculture (although certainly not the only musical expression of this broad movement). Many of the most important acid rock bands, like the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Janis Joplin and her band Big Brother and the Holding Company, among others, emerged from San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district, which was the west coast's pre-eminent countercultural community. The band Jefferson Airplane's ode to psychedelia "White Rabbit" captures the essence of the Haight-Ashbury music scene during this period.

This article will discuss some of the multiple historical threads that contributed to the emergence of San Francisco's counterculture and the music that it helped to generate.

Jonathon Bakan is a musician and ethno/musicologist.

Note: Many videotaped performances of the music and concerts referred to here can be found on the internet. Search using Google Videos.

Political and Economic Situation

After WWII, the United States emerged as the capitalist world's leading power. US domination of the non-Communist world was based on military strength, political alliances and the flooding of world markets with American-made goods of every sort. Heavy industries like steel, auto, chemical and electronics were the backbone of this economy, which was supported by both consumer and government military spending. The labour movement also secured significant gains during this period – by 1960 roughly 30 percent of the non-agricultural workforce was unionized, and real wages had doubled since 1941. Post-secondary education also expanded enormously during this period. By 1960 there were 3.6 million students enrolled in US colleges – twice as many as in 1940. These students would play a key role in the soon-to-develop radical mass movement.

Cold War

But all was not well during this period. With the dissolution of direct colonial rule in Asia and Africa, there was fierce competition between the Soviet Union (and increasingly, Communist China) and the US for the allegiance of newly independent states. One such conflict was emerging in Vietnam, a very small nation in southeast Asia. In the early 1960s, US President John F. Kennedy sought to counter the expansion of Communist influence by increasing the American military presence in Vietnam, raising the troop level from about 800 in 1960 to about 11,000 by January 1963. By the end of 1967 there would be 485,640 American troops in Vietnam, and 19,562 American deaths. Before it was over 58,000 American soldiers would die in Vietnam.

Over the course of the 1960s, the increasing casualties took a growing toll on American social consciousness. Especially among young people, the relative affluence of the post-war boom appeared increasingly superficial as more and more young men came home dead or mutilated from the war in Vietnam.

AP PHOTO/JACKSON DAILY NEWS/FRED BLACKWELL

Racist whites pour sugar, ketchup and mustard over the heads of sit-in demonstrators at a restaurant lunch counter in Jackson, Mississippi in 1963.

Civil Rights

Another area of instability in American society was the continuing oppression of African Americans. Even after the US victory against fascism in Europe, racism and racial segregation – the regime known as Jim Crow – was still in effect in the US. While there had been a strong anti-segregationist movement even prior to WW2, especially in the urban north, racial segregation was still firmly in place well into the 1960s, even in the north. American blacks suffered all forms of economic discrimination. At mid-century, black family income was only 55 percent of white family income. All through the 1950s and early 1960s, black unemployment stayed at roughly twice the level of white unemployment. In southern cities like Birmingham, Alabama, terrorist attacks by white supremacists like the Ku Klux Klan were commonly used to prevent blacks from living in white neighbourhoods. Between 1947 and 1963, there were over 50 bombings of black homes, churches and businesses in and around Birmingham.

But there was also opposition. Black civil rights activists were gathering in the safest places they could find – local churches. As a result, Southern black churches often became centres of civil rights activities. In the mid 1950s, much of the civil rights activity in the south was focused on equal access to quality education for black youth, and there were significant legal victories. Since segregated black schools were poorly equipped and funded as compared to white schools, this activism was often focused on integrating schools. In 1951, black parents in Topeka, Kansas, with the help of the Topeka National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), asked for a court injunction to ban segregation in Topeka's public schools. Finally, in 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that school segregation violated the US constitution.

Lunch Counter Sit-Ins

But despite legal victories like the Topeka case and others, many forms of segregation continued. Civil disobedience – direct action protests – among southern blacks continued to grow. In early 1960, four black college students sat down at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greens-

Voices of 68 —

I mean it is the only thing in Toronto worth reading on acid.

Letter to the editor,
Toronto counterculture publication
Harbinger 2(1)

boro, North Carolina, only to be refused service because of their race. They waited for 45 minutes before finally leaving. But they returned the following day with 23 other black students and this time did not leave all day. On the third day, they occupied every seat at the lunch counter, and by week's end were joined by white students from a local women's college. Inspired by the sit-in, other lunch counter sit-ins were staged until there were similar protests happening in 54 southern cities. By the end of the year, most of these protests had succeeded in getting service for blacks in the cities where they were staged.

The lunch counter sit-ins were led by black college students – young people who had come to maturity watching their own families and communities being left out of the growing social affluence enjoyed by large swathes of the white working-class population. These black youth had also seen that simply getting racist laws changed could have little real effect in changing their status in society.

In April of 1960, riding a wave of non-violent direct action protest, black student activists met in Raleigh and founded the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). SNCC adopted a more radical, direct-action oriented strategy and rejected what they perceived as the more conservative activism of both the NAACP and Martin Luther King.

SNCC was significant in being the first radical organization of college students to lead the fight against racism. Their explicit focus on non-violent direct action (rather than lobbying, etc.) was new in the post-war era and SNCC would be an inspiration for the radical student movement that would emerge in the coming few years.

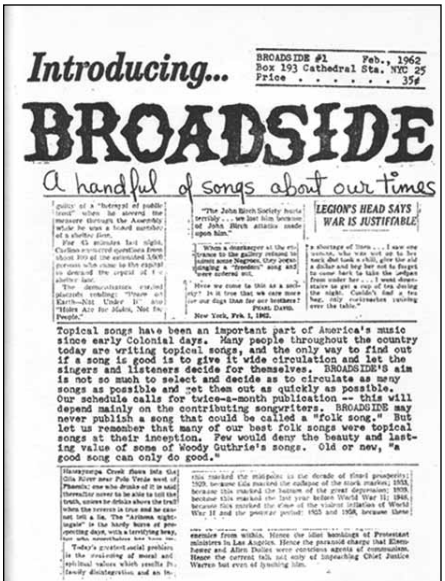
White Cultural Disaffection

Even among those white communities that were enjoying the benefits of economic expansion, not everyone was happy. There was a growing sense – largely expressed by intellectuals and artists, but undoubtedly felt by others – that the new American social affluence was culturally and spiritually empty, that the culture of mainstream, suburbanizing America was barren and spiritually deadening. In spite of the unprecedented affluence within white America, growing numbers of intellectuals were decrying the emptiness and conformity of suburban life. Writer Lewis Mumford described suburbia as "a treeless, communal waste, inhabited by people … witnessing the same television performances, eating the same tasteless pre-fabricated foods from the same freezers."

In this environment, there were emergent cultural movements that were critiquing the complacency, and conformity, of American affluence. Malvina Reynolds' song "Little Boxes," performed by Pete Seeger, is exemplary of this critical element in the music.

One musical expression of the political storm that was brewing was the launch in 1962 of *Broadside*, an urban folk music publication. *Broadside* was founded by two social activists from the "old left" of the 1940s, Agnes "Sis" Cunningham and Gordon Friesen, with funding by Pete Seeger. Seeger was a prominent folksinger with strong ties to the old left and a founding member of the left-wing folk music group The Almanac Singers.

The first issue of *Broadside* was produced on mimeograph with six songs, including one by a young Bob Dylan, making "Talking John Birch" the first of his songs ever to be published. Dylan was frequently published in *Broadside* and most or all of his explicitly political songs were published in the magazine. Gordon Friesen would often give newspaper clippings to Dylan as suggested raw materials for topical songs. Dylan's "The Lonesome Death of Hettie Carrol" was one such song that resulted from those clippings.



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LEGION'S HEAD SAYS WAR IS JUSTIFIABLE

Topical songs have been an important part of America's music since early Colonial days. Many people throughout the country today are writing topical songs, and the only way to find out if a song is good is to give it wide circulation and let the singers and listeners decide for themselves. BROADSIDE'S aim is not so much to select and decide as to circulate as many songs as possible and get them out as quickly as possible. Our schedule calls for twice-a-month publication -- this will depend mainly on the contributing songwriters. BROADSIDE may never publish a song that could be called a "folk song." But let us remember that many of our best folk songs were topical songs at their inception. Few would deny the beauty and lasting value of some of Woody Guthrie's songs. Old or new, "a good song can only do good."

Ken Kesey and the "Beats"

Social disaffection was also expressed by "Beat" poets and writers like Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and novelist Ken Kesey. Kesey is best known for his two novels, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Sometimes a Great Notion*. But his significance for this story is that he was also an extremely prominent figure in the San Francisco counterculture, contributing to its culture of psychedelia in

Above: Radical music publication *Broadside* was founded by social activists.

Right: Folksingers Joan Baez and Bob Dylan

important ways.

In 1958, Kesey, then a graduate student at Stanford University, moved into a bohemian community in Palo Alto, California – at that time a centre of California's literary, intellectual and artistic elite. In 1960, Kesey volunteered to be a paid subject in psychological experiments conducted at a nearby Veterans Administration Hospital on the effects of various psychoactive drugs including mescaline, psilocybin and LSD. As part of the experiment, Kesey was paid to write down the effects of his drug experiences.

Inspired by these experiences, he introduced the drugs to his family and wide circle of friends. By 1964 Kesey's home had become the centre of a kind of drugged-out alternative literary and artistic community with people like Hunter S. Thompson and Allen Ginsberg, members of San Francisco's artistic avant-garde, as well as the local Hell's Angels, all spending time there or attending parties. According to writer Hunter S. Thompson, Kesey's home was "the world capital of madness. There were no rules, fear was unknown and sleep was out of the question." And all manner of drug experimentation was going on.

In the fall of 1965, Kesey and his friends expanded their parties into large-scale public events. Now going by the monicker The Merry Pranksters, Kesey and his entourage called these events "Acid Tests." For the price of one dollar, those in attendance would receive a cup of LSD-laced "electric" Kool-Aid. One might find a room full of "thunder machines," large soundmakers constructed from auto parts, piano strings, etc. for participants to explore and improvise on, or live music provided by the band that would later be known as the Grateful Dead.

Student Politics

Finally, and crucially for the political and social milieu around San Francisco, was the emerging radical student movement at University of California (UC) Berkeley. During the 1960s, radical student politics, based primarily in universities, became an important feature of cultural and political life. UC Berkeley was among the foremost centres of student activism. In the early 1960s, Berkeley students were active in a growing series of political demonstrations, first against hearings of the Congressional House Committee on Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) which conducted the McCarthy witchhunts against suspected radicals, and later in campaigns against racism and war. In 1964 student radicalism at Berkeley exploded in the free speech movement, a massive student protest involving acts of civil disobedience, sit-ins and occupations of university buildings, confrontations with police and so on, that was sparked when the university administration forbade the distribution of political literature on campus property.

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The tactics and rhetoric of the free speech movement was very strongly rooted in the traditions of the old left, and represents a line of continuity reaching back to the left-wing movement of previous decades, as well as the civil rights activism of SNCC and others in the previous few years. So it is not surprising that folk music, with its long association with the old left, became the music of choice for early student activists.

1965 – The Turning Point

In 1965, the US again increased the intensity of its involvement in Vietnam. It aimed to destroy Vietnamese Communist opposition by the unrestrained use of its military superiority. In February 1965, the US began a massive and sustained bombing campaign, Operation Rolling Thunder, which would continue unabated for three years. The air war was supported by an increase in troops on the ground. Here is how historians Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin described it:

"Sometimes intelligence reports pinpointed the exact location of an enemy unit. Then fighter-bombers, helicopter gunships, and the big B-52s … could pile on the enemy with bombs, rockets, and napalm, followed by ground troops delivered by helicopter to landing zones nearby. But more often, soldiers and marines had to pull on their packs and [set out on foot] seeking contact with the enemy in the back country. … When contact was made, the troops could call in artillery, napalm strikes, and helicopter gunships. Afterward, the enemy bodies would be counted up and compared to American casualties. … Military dispatches would boast of a favorable 'kill ratio,' and another victory would be chalked up. Killing the enemy was not the means to tactical or strategic gain such as taking back this or that village or hilltop from the enemy. Killing the enemy was an end in itself in a war of attrition."

War and the Youth

The increasing war had a tremendous impact on college-aged youth. The brunt of the war was carried by young American draftees – disproportionately blacks and Hispanics, although many white kids were also drafted. The average age

Voices of 68 —

Forty radical student leaders send out for pizza and begin talk of revolution.

The Globe and Mail,
Sept 10, 1968

Above left: Country Joe and the Fish; right: Jimi Hendrix.

of soldiers was 19, some younger. As a result, students became increasingly concerned about the war. In response to the increased involvement in Vietnam, the main left-wing national student political organization, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), grew in a big way. Students from all over the country began to write in to the SDS asking how they could get involved.

San Francisco Rock

Meanwhile, some big changes were happening in folk music, the most explicitly political music of the day. In 1965, Bob Dylan, then the pre-eminent political folk musician, created a storm of controversy by rejecting his earlier acoustic sound and adopting an electric, rock-influenced approach to his music, first on one half of his album *Bringing it All Back Home* (released March 1965) and then performing with the Paul Butterfield Blues band at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival.

This was a radical departure and one that alienated many of Dylan's fans in the urban political folk community. But Dylan's embrace of an amplified, rock-based musical aesthetic also inspired a number of young folk performers to follow his lead by adopting important elements taken from rock into their music. The musicians who played in the San Francisco acid rock bands The Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Country Joe and the Fish, and singer Janis Joplin, all first began as performers of folk music who embraced elements from electric rock music after 1965.

Under Dylan's influence, popular music began changing, from a simpler, more lighthearted form of escapist entertainment, into something else. For example, the first hit pop song in the fall of 1965 was "Eve of Destruction," a Dylanesque political folk-rock piece recorded by Barry McGuire.

Country Joe and the Fish

Among the most explicitly political of the bands to emerge from San Francisco after 1965 was Country Joe and the Fish. The band's lead singer, Joe McDonald, was born in 1942 to left-wing parents – he is said to have been named after Joseph Stalin. In 1964 he began studies at UC Berkeley and soon found himself participating in the left-wing folk music scene while also becoming active in campus politics. While at Berkeley, he played in a folk group called The Instant Action Jug Band that included Barry Melton, and at times as many as 10 other musicians. When members of this group made their first recordings in 1965, they did so under the name Country Joe and the Fish – the name a reference to a quotation from Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong, that "The

The magic bus: Ken Kesey bought the bus in the mid-1960s and took it on trips – both hallucinogenic and cross-country. In the parlance of the day, you were either "on the bus" – i.e., open to an alternative lifestyle – or you were "off the bus."

people are like water and the [Red] army is like fish." Like other folk musicians and ensembles, by 1966, Country Joe and the Fish had reorganized and switched to an all electric, amplified rock format.

"Are You Experienced"

By 1966 the psychedelic, countercultural scene was starting to become an international phenomenon. In London, England, ex-patriot American electric guitarist Jimi Hendrix put together his innovative band, The Jimi Hendrix Experience.

Hendrix was probably the most important and influential electric guitarist

of the 1960s. His music would exert a strong artistic influence on a wide range of musicians well beyond the sphere of rock or popular music. Hendrix, who had worked in various American rhythm and blues bands, including those of the Isley Brothers and Little Richard, relocated to London, England in the fall of 1966. Upon arrival, Hendrix quickly put together the band that would launch him to international fame and establish him as a countercultural icon.

Hendrix and The Jimi Hendrix Experience quickly created a sensation among leading British rockers like Paul McCartney, Mick Jagger, Jeff Beck and Pete Townshend. In the summer of 1967, the band's first album, *Are You Experienced* placed number two on the pop album charts. In June of that year The Jimi Hendrix Experience returned to the US to perform at the Monterey Pop festival – said to be the first large-scale rock festival – where he performed along with Janis Joplin, Otis Redding, the British rock band The Who and Indian classical musician Ravi Shankar. Hendrix's 1967 performance at Monterey introduced the innovative guitarist to the American countercultural community. Indeed, for many, Hendrix's music – tunes like "Stone Free," "Purple Haze" and others – would become emblematic of the counterculture, its politics, aesthetics and lifestyle.

In 1969 Hendrix performed with his band at the peak musical and artistic event of the counterculture, the Woodstock Music and Art Fair, a three-day festival of music, dance and protest involving hundreds of thousands of people. Also at Woodstock were Janis Joplin, Country Joe and the Fish, The Grateful Dead and many other performers associated with the countercultural music scene.

At Woodstock, Hendrix played one of his most political musical performances, reworking the American national anthem, "The Star Spangled Banner," as a searing critique of the American establishment and its war in Vietnam, while also presenting a militant expression of countercultural creativity, asserting the legitimacy of his radically innovative approaches to electric guitar playing.

'This Whole Funky World is a Ghetto'

Black Power and Soul Music

by Daniel Serge

According to liberals, the civil rights movement in the US had two phases. From the mid-1950s to the early 1960s, African-Americans and their allies mounted non-violent boycotts, mass marches and campaigns for integration and equality. The mid-1960s to the early 1970s saw riots across America, assassinations and the rise of the militant Black Panther Party. The Panthers carried guns and preached armed self-defence. Demonstrations were violent and chaotic. The rallying cry was "Black Power." This second, "bad" phase was seen as the youthful excess of the baby boom generation.

Black pop music doesn't fit comfortably into this story. Rhythm and blues broke through the colour barrier during the civil rights movement. But in the midst of the conflict that followed in the later phase, the music got better – faster, more danceable and more topical. Soul gave way to funk with its driving rhythms, improvisation and cross-pollination with psychedelic rock. By the time soul singer Bobby Patterson declared the whole funky world to be a ghetto in 1972, there was a rich tradition of hard funk and soul denouncing poverty and oppression.

How could such a violent, hopeless era produce such good music? The answer is that the liberals are wrong. The Black Power movement expressed hope and a determination that formal political equality wasn't enough. Blacks needed social and economic equality too. The Panthers arose to meet that need. Pop music gave voice to it.

Civil Rights

Soul music is a catch-all term for rhythm and blues (R&B), funk and the myriad other genres of black music that flourished during the period. It came from the same place as the civil rights movement – the black gospel church which organized both the famous sit-ins and bus rides in the Southern US and provided venues where soul music stars like Ray Charles and the Staples Singers got their starts. Late in the 1950s,

Continued next page

The radical moment of the 1960s had many threads, some explicitly political, others only peripherally so, most often with layered and contradictory meanings. But for everyone involved it was a time of ideological fluidity, experimentation and redefinition. In this context, the free and creative exploration of new expressive music forms, in rock and elsewhere, was itself was an emancipatory declaration, an assertion of the possibility of a future free from war, oppression, exploitation and the spiritual emptiness of mass culture under post-war capitalism.

When Hendrix reworked "The Star Spangled Banner," he was not only providing an unmistakable critique of American militarism, he was also creating a vision of an imagined future, making tangible in musical experience the hope and possibility of a world of freedom, human creativity, and spiritual fulfillment. ★

Recommended Reading

Isserman, Maurice, and Michael Kazin. 2000. America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s. *New York: Oxford University Press.*

Black Panthers: dedicated to black pride and freedom.

entrepreneurs realized that gospel singers had the potential to break out of the segregated music market, rigidly separated between black and white listeners, and create albums that both groups would buy. Civil rights had nothing to do with it – the white audience was much bigger and promised more profit.

However, R&B artists themselves were affected by the struggles of their people. Sam Cooke's 1964 "Change Is Gonna Come" vividly reflected the aspirations of civil rights, all the more so because Cooke was a clean-cut mainstream star. Stevie Wonder covered Bob Dylan's "Blowin' In The Wind" in 1966 as an allegory of the movement, while The Impressions' 1965 "People Get Ready" dealt with the massive 1963 civil rights march on Washington. These are highlights from a huge number of songs that shared the hopes of social change through non-violent struggle.

The Black Power movement arose out of the ashes of the civil rights movement. Formal political rights didn't mean an end to oppression and, as the 60s wore on, US blacks were still poor, undereducated, living in slums and overrepresented in the military – itself a racist institution. Political leaders Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X grew more radical along with the burgeoning New Left.

The Black Power movement dedicated itself to black pride and freedom "by any means necessary," including armed struggle. The Black Panther Party, a militant organization for black self-determination and an end to police brutality and US imperialism, had thousands of members at its height, a newspaper that sold 140,000 copies weekly and an impact well beyond its numbers.

While Black Panther leaders Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale were organizing armed self-defence committees in Oakland, California in 1966, artists affiliated with the Black Arts Movement (BAM) were publishing poetry and literary journals in New York and Chicago and performing in jazz ensembles. BAM artists drew their material from Black Power demonstrations where they often performed. Since the link between culture and politics existed from the outset of the movement, it is no surprise that Black Power both used, and was reflected in, popular black music.

Daniel Serge does not have Soul, but would like some.

From Black Voices to Black Power

It's easy to look back on the quaint songs of early 60s R&B and forget that even their liberal, allegorical lyrics were a victory. Before then, black-made music was marketed as "race music" to black audiences through record labels and radio stations that never reached whites. It took decades until white audience could even listen to black artists, let alone what was being said. But the road from simple representation – having a black person on the radio – to Black Power was fast and steep. James Brown, for example, brought funk music to black and white audiences. Songs like "Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud" became civil rights anthems.

Yet it was Brown's bandmates who had to push him to record political songs. For Brown, a staunch capitalist, pop was first and foremost a business. Motown and the other major labels were conservative. They didn't record black power music until audiences demanded it. Even then, they often released political songs on subsidiary labels by secondary artists. "War," with its militant question of "What is it good for? Absolutely nothing!", was written for superstars The Temptations, but Motown boss Barry Gordy didn't want his star performers upsetting white audiences so he gave it to Edwin Starr, a lesser-known artist, who made his career on it.

In 1970, just six years after Cooke's passive lament, "A Change Is Gonna Come," Martha and the Vandellas recorded "I Should Be Proud," in which lead singer Martha Reeves sang that a lover killed in Vietnam "didn't die for me" but for "the evils of this world."

Voices of 68

... an enormously exciting alternative. ... It consists of learning the rules of the game by which most people play out their lives, in our case, those of the technological society – and then using them to create ways of life which subvert the values those rules usually serve.

Dennis Lee describing Toronto's experimental Rochdale College, Rochdale Handbook, *1968. From Rochdale College Museum, http://homepages.nyu.edu/~spores01/rochdale.html*

In many ways, the Vietnam War crushed the hopes raised by the civil rights movement. Veterans began returning from Vietnam injured and angry. The deaths of Vietnamese civilians, along with their heroic resistance, fed into the awakening sense that faith in American capitalism would not bring the promised land. Blacks rioted in Watts, California in 1965, in Detroit in 1967 and across the country after King was assassinated in 1968. Along with the community, black musicians picked up the new militancy.

The liberal music press is embarrassed by political music, condemning it as didactic and simplistic. But at the height of Black Power, politics inspired the work of brilliant musicians. In 1970, Curtis Mayfield recorded "Power To The People" and in 1971 the Chi-Lites made "(For God's Sakes) Give More Power To The People" – both based on the Panther slogan. To many African-Americans, Mayfield embodied Black Power more than King. Nina Simone recorded her own Black Power numbers and also reworked The Beatles' counter-revolutionary "Revolution." The original weasels, "You tell me it's the institution/well, you know/you better free you mind instead." Simone answers, "Now we got a revolution/because I see the face of things to come... I'm here to tell you about destruction/of all the evil that will have to end."

Elaine Brown, an editor of the Panthers' newspaper and later chair of the party, released two albums of militant jazz and spoken word poetry, *Seize The Time* and *Until We're Free*. Gil Scott-Heron and The Last Poets are militant black nationalists whose songs – including Scott-Heron's "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised," and The Last Poet's "Niggers Are Afraid Of Revolution" – are anthems of the era. The Watts riots, which so horrified mainstream America, inspired the Watts Prophets to rap, "Ever since they passed the civil rights/Those fires have been lighting up the nights/And they say they ain't gonna stop/till we all have equal rights."

Many Black Power songs were recorded on small, independent labels by unknown artists or those known as balladeers. Gary Byrd, who collaborated with Stevie Wonder and worked as a radio DJ, wrote "Are You Really Ready For Black Power?" a socialist call-to-arms for the movement:

Curtis Mayfield album cover makes a strong political statement.

The idea seems to be that money will make us free
Black capitalism says the system is what we really need
But what difference does it make in the colour of that hand
If it takes food from the mouths of black people in order to become a richer man?

The Main Ingredient was a second-string ballad group. But their song, "Black Seeds," saw them stepping away from their standard apolitical fare to chide "the people who would condemn, in slavery time, their brothers and sister for being ignorant ... you black man, should love those brothers and sisters, even in death; for their valiant struggle for life made you what you are today." "Black Seeds" combines its musical plea with African drums and a blistering horn section. In this period, funk got heavier, stronger and deeper – much like the black liberation struggle itself.

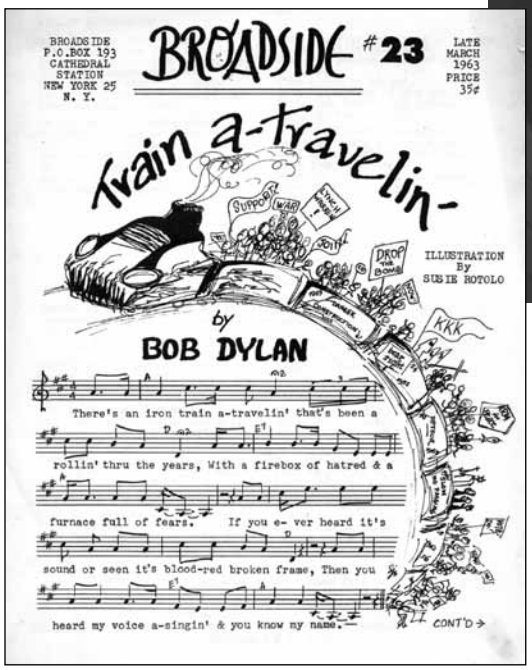
The Black Power movement declined in the 1970s under pressure from police and FBI subterfuge, the internal contradictions of its marxist-leninist dogma and the retreat of the left in general. But its music lives on. The rap-poetry it created was the basis for hip-hop and today its songs are being released on compilations and through the internet. It is now music consumed by the subculture of soul enthusiasts, no longer part of a vibrant movement. Still, it is an important reminder of what happens when a mass movement grows. Culture is never an exact mirror of politics, but the two get closer together when society goes into ferment. When political struggle declines, artists are no better at politics than anyone else. Today, although there is a re-emerging underground in hip-hop, most of black pop music is as soulless as its white indie-rock counterpart.

At its height, Black Power shaped the music that even liberals cherish. Jimi Hendrix was a talented musician who remained apolitical while his black compatriots were singing about struggle. But when people asked him to name his favourite guitar player, he always said Curtis Mayfield, whose music embodied Black Power to millions. Militant funk and soul reflects the real legacy of civil rights – a radical, anti-racist and sometimes anti-capitalist movement that reached into economics, politics and culture. As the Chi-Lites say, "They know we're not satisfied, so we begin to holler. ... Now we're gonna get on up and get some more of it." ★

If I Had A Song

Folk music and politics in 1960s English Canada

BY GARY CRISTALL



Above: Label of The Milestones' recording funded by the BC Federation of Labour – Canada's first labour songs recording, 1965.

Left: Cover of *Broadside*, a New York publication devoted to political folk music in the 60s. This one features an obscure song by Bob Dylan.

The Origins

In English Canada, folk music as a genre of popular music was pretty much assembled and popularized in the 50s by a small group of cultural activists in the orbit of the Labour Progressive Party (LPP) and its youth wing the National Federation of Labour Youth (NFLY). These were the names adopted for the Communist Party of Canada and the Young Communist League after they were banned in the early 40s as a result of their opposition to the war.

Folk music, or "people's music" as it was first called, was adopted by the Communists as part of the popular front in the mid-30s. Following the doctrine of socialist realism, the party and its followers looked for music that met the criteria of "socialist in content, national in form." Folk music with its roots deep in the plebian and national culture fit the bill beautifully.

After the Second World War, as the cold war began, the LPP adopted the slogan of "Put Canada First." In music, this meant folk music – ranging from traditional songs, collected by folklorists whose politics were more often than not on the right wing of the political spectrum, to the writing of new folk songs about current issues, to songs imported from struggles in many lands from China to South Africa to the Nazi Germany of the 30s.

The rewriting of Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land" with Canadian references by The Travellers – either in or sympathetic to the LPP/NFLY – was emblematic of folk music of the day. With its nationalist and populist aesthetic, the song produced Canada's first folk hit in the late 50s.

The success of The Travellers occurred simultaneously with the success in the US of the Kingston Trio. The Trio's massive radio hit in 1958, an old Appalachian murder ballad called "Tom Dooley," ushered in the folk boom and generated a thousand similar groups and soloists. In Canada, folk clubs began to open everywhere. In 1961, the first Mariposa Folk Festival was held north of Toronto in Orillia. By 1962 there were dozens of folk music singers of one form or the other gracing stages across the country. A year or so later, Bob Dylan established the singer-songwriter as a legitimate figure on the folk scene.

Political Songs

Many of the artists who pioneered folk music in Canada in this period performed a mixture of songs that included traditional ballads with no obvious political content and songs that were highly political.

In my collection of some 30 hours of tapes made in a Vancouver club in the early 60s, there are numerous examples of the political content of a folk music performance. Songs sung include "The Miner's Lifeguard," a union song from the Kentucky coal fields; Woody Guthrie's "Talking Dust Bowl" from the Depression; "The Klan," an anti-racist song written by the actor Alan Arkin, and "Vive La Quince Brigada" from the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War. Canadian songs were drawn from labour history: "Are You From Bevan?" about the coal miners' strike on Vancou-

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ver Island in the 1910s; "Last Night I Had The Strangest Dream," a peace song; and new songs like Pete Wyborn's "Sugar Refinery" about working in Vancouver's Rogers' Sugar factory.

In the mid-60s, union federations sponsored two recordings. In Vancouver, the British Columbia Federation of Labour (BC Fed) sponsored a record of political songs by The Milestones for the 1965 BC Fed convention and 50th anniversary of the murder of labour songwriter Joe Hill. It featured songs from early union battles and a new song about medicare.

A year later, as a centennial project, the Canadian Labour Congress helped The Travellers record an entire album of labour songs – a cross-country survey of mainly Canadian union songs, from a 19th century Knights of Labour anthem to a recent composition about the 1966 strike at Peterborough's Tilco plant. They are obscure recordings but testify to the impact of the folk boom on workers and their organizations. These weren't counterculture projects in any sense. Both The Travellers and The Milestones performed widely for union meetings and conventions as well as picket lines.

New Songwriters

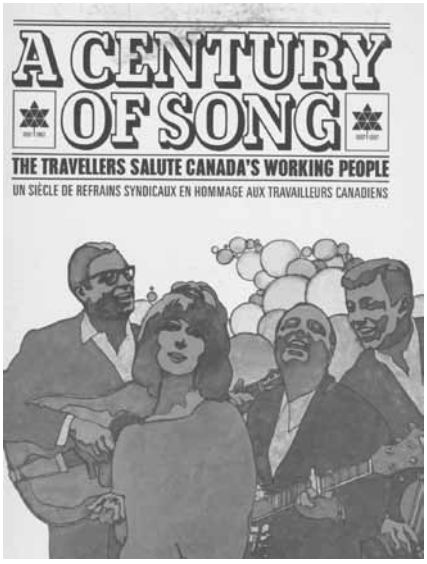
Songs by new songwriters began to appear, reflecting the social movements that were entering the scene. Perhaps the most often addressed topic was peace. Bonnie Dobson, a product of the Toronto NFLY, moved to the US and met with great success as an interpreter of traditional songs. The first song she wrote, "Morning Dew," an apocalyptic description of a post-nuclear deathscape, was widely recorded by everyone from the Grateful Dead to Lulu to the Jeff Beck Group.

Other issues drew the attention of artists. US draft resisters penned songs against the draft. Karen James, a prominent early folksinger, wrote a song about American folk singer Pete Seeger's refusal to testify before the McCarthyite "Unamerican" hearings. A Montreal group, The Newlanders, recorded a song denouncing the framing and execution of Wilbur Coffin for the murder of three American hunters in Quebec's Gaspé region. Aboriginal artist Willie Dunn made a record for the radical magazine *Akwesasne Notes* that contained powerful songs about Aboriginal history and reality, including one about a young man who died of exposure fleeing a residential school.

These writers and their songs laid the basis for the flowering of political songwriting in the 70s, when artists including Bruce Cockburn, Murray MacLachlan, Perth County Conspiracy, Rita MacNeil, Vera Johnson, Stringband, Nancy White and dozens more would expand and extend political songwriting.

The times and the radicalization that characterized them had an impact on artists who were and remain prominent both at home and abroad. Ian Tyson was relatively conservative in his politics but on Ian and Sylvia's Nashville recording he contributed two songs that stand out as very different from his usual fare. "House of Cards" is a powerful antiwar song, while "The Renegade" deals with the repression of aboriginal traditions.

Leonard Cohen included a song from the French anti-fascist resistance during the Second World War on his first recording. Two songwriters who came directly from the folk music scene had international hits with political songs, one relatively gentle, the other a searing ballad. Joni Mitchell wrote one of the first environmental songs, "Big Yellow Taxi," comparing a relationship with "my old man" to that with the earth. The chorus, "they paved paradise and put up a parking lot," still works well. Neil Young looked at the



Cover of The Travellers' union songs record, issued for the 1967 Canadian Centennial.

picture of one of the students murdered at an antiwar demonstration by the Ohio National Guard at Kent State in May of 1970 and produced "Ohio," ending with "How can you run when you know?" – a call to action.

The Movement and the Music

While the legitimizing of political content in popular music is the main legacy of folk music in Canada in the 60s, it is the functionality of the music – its integration into political action – that is most important.

Folk music was the ultimate in low tech. A single singer was all you needed, a guitar or banjo was cheap and required no technological support. At a thousand gatherings, songs were sung by singers who had few if any thoughts of turning pro. A casual review of flyers from the time lists uncounted and mainly unremembered singers performing at demonstrations and meetings. In that sense, it really was the music of the folk, songs drawn from struggle by artists who were an organic part of the movements they performed for.

While it is well worth searching out the music, it is even more useful to remember the 60s as a time when folk music was not a commodity but more often a tool and a weapon. ★

Voices of 68

Those who talk of revolution and class struggle with no explicit reference to daily life, without understanding the subversive character of love and the positive aspects of refusal, have a corpse in their mouth.

Wall slogan, Paris 1968

Dropping out to change the world?

The 60s Counterculture and Radical Activism

by Peter Graham

Radicalism has long been associated with forms of counterculture, as dissidents used clothing, haircuts, music or particular expressions to set themselves apart from the mainstream. The Socialist Party in Canada was founded in part by disillusioned utopian colonists. Members of the Industrial Workers of the World wore distinctive caps and rumpled garb. In the 30s, young communists donned Bolshevik-styled black leather jackets. But counterculture of the 1960s would have an impact on the very DNA of the socialist movement.

The 60s counterculture was born in a youth rebellion against the social norms and politics of the 1950s. Its anti-hierarchy ethos led it to challenge prevailing assumptions concerning gender, race and sexuality, both within mainstream society and in organizations of the left. Existing socialist organizations seemed a little bemused by this development, yet were hopeful that it was an indication of a political awakening.

In the counterculture, politics were primarily expressed through new ways of living and thinking. In current sketches of the 60s, the period is often associated with music, sex and drugs, and only secondarily with radical politics. Only a minority of the counterculture worked in the political arena. Although the subculture was antiwar, few were antiwar activists. As they had no monolithic counterculture, politicos, speed freaks, back-to-the-landers and the like often had little interaction with each other, outside their common cultural interests.

Counterculture and Mainstream

"Politicos" was the word used in the counterculture to refer to people focussed on activism. Politicos varied widely in their embrace of the counterculture.

HTTP://WWW.HISTORYOFRIGHTS.COM/ASSETS/GASTOWN_RIOT_CROWD.JPG

The Gastown riot in Vancouver was the most charged moment in struggles between the hippie subculture and the police.

There tended to be differences between white male activists and proponents of queer, black and women's liberation. Although Toronto lacked politico groups that centred around a counter-cultural thrust (Toronto's Diggers were neither as flamboyant or counter-cultural as their American counterpart), there were a number that integrated the counterculture into their political practice. The Black Youth Organization favoured traditional African clothing and saw the recreation of black identity and culture as the first step towards liberation and socialism. Members of the May 4th Movement adopted the uniform of the white counterculture and viewed some drugs, like marijuana and LSD, as assisting in the revolutionary process.

Even some official institutions got into the counterculture act, most spectacularly in the form of a weekend-long conference exploring LSD at the University of Toronto. Even though LSD guru Timothy Leary was held up at the border, conference participants explored 10 rooms constructed to simulate a hallucinatory experience and listened to the underground rock stylings of The Fugs. Local television shows like *Up Against the Wall* in Ottawa and *Guerrilla* in Toronto tried to capitalize on youth radicalism, while Toronto's CHUM-FM was branded as an alternative radio station.

Numerous businesses, including some small chains, were founded to make money from this burgeoning culture. Community-focused groups set up commerce-free spaces, which included free stores, co-ops and even a government-funded "rap room." As with any subculture, some time was spent defining its boundaries. Many lamented a decline of authenticity as the counterculture at times threatened to become *the* mainstream youth culture, and attracted much media attention. The chief villain here was the "weekend

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At one demonstration, Toronto's Harbinger sought to rattle the square left by decking out a five-ton truck with huge signs advertising "Freaks for Peace."

hippy," a business person at heart who would don hip duffs.

But the main media voice of the counterculture was the underground newspaper. Toronto's *Guerrilla* sought to integrate the youth movement into broader struggles, while *Logos* in Montreal set upon "making Marxism hip." At one demonstration, Toronto's *Harbinger* sought to rattle the square left by decking out a five-ton truck with huge signs advertising "Freaks for Peace."

A Hippie Diversion?

I won't attempt a balance sheet of the counterculture, but will focus here on refuting some of the slings and arrows lobed towards it from the left. The hostile attitudes within the socialist movements of the time are notable, and their arguments have recently been buttressed by publication of *The Rebel Sell* by Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter.

The Rebel Sell looks at the counterculture in terms of questions of reform and revolution. Rather than seeing the counterculture as a favourable milieu for socialist ideas, the authors see it as a rival. To Heath and Potter, numerous young people broke from the conservative mainstream in the 60s only to fall into the dangerous trap of the counterculture. Had this tie-dyed wool not covered their eyes, they surely would have become political activists, making real change possible. But instead, this bourgeois safety device diverted these nascent revolutionaries from challenging capitalism on the political field and led them into impotent struggles of personal transformation and the like.

But, unfortunately for us politicos, a majority of people have never become political activists, whether we're talking about the 60s or the Russian revolution. Instead of wishing for a utopian result like the authors of *The Rebel Sell*, it is more useful to investigate what really did happen – how the counterculture became an important conduit for political development and action.

Radical Activism & Counterculture

Maoists, the practitioners of the most popular form of Leninism in the 60s, were divided in their approach to this phenomena. The May 4th Movement, previously mentioned, swam with the counterculture while the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) favoured a clean-cut look and decried any drug use. Anecdotally, members of the Young Communist League seemed to embrace the counterculture more than members of the trotskyist Young Socialists, whose organizing in this milieu may have been encumbered by their relatively mainstream appearance and a regulation compelling its members to leave any area where marijuana was being smoked.

The fundamental criticism of the Maoists was that the counterculture was bourgeois (it was no accident that feminism and homosexuality were put in this same framework). Yet numerous working-class youth had joined the counterculture. By the early 1970s, the smoking of marijuana on the factory floor had begun to rival alcohol use. It was the new generation of factory workers, defined in part by countercultural ideas, that was responsible for the wave of walkouts and wildcat strikes that occurred during this period, most prominently in the auto industry.

Workers against Hippies?

Those young people from socialist organizations who entered factories to proselytize amongst the working class often ignored countercultural working class youth, with whom they may have had something in common, in favour of the "average worker." Some young activists made the discovery that strong connections could be made in the workplace outside a specific class appeal. Some workers, for example, were politicized by working class feminism.

From blue-collar poets performing at coffee shops at the beginning of the 60s to the young drop-outs who helped spark Yorkville's hepatitis scare, working class youth were an integral part of the counterculture. Wacheea, a tent city community, was struck to help accommodate a deluge of 300,000 young transients who were expected to storm Toronto one summer. Although that number never materialized, some who did come were able to make an irregular income by selling copies of *Guerrilla*.

The 1960s counterculture should not be viewed as something apart from, and opposed to, the political radicalism of the times. In many ways, the counterculture and political radicalism complemented each other in the creation of spaces for challenging the system and experimenting with new ways of life. On the ground, however, there were also important tensions between those who saw alternative lifestyles as an end in themselves and those focussed primarily on political change. ★

Voices of 68

Six bucks for a New Year's eve party sparked off a protest complete with regalia (leaflets, placards, etc.).

Harbinger *(no date) reporting on a protest against a cover charge for a New Year's eve party at Grossman's Tavern in Toronto, a counterculture hangout.*

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