An extraordinary work that brings to life the exciting events and trends of the Sixties in Canada.

THE SIXTIES IN CANADA
A Turbulent And Creative Decade
M. Athena Palaeologu, editor
Preface by Dimitri Roussopoulos

The Sixties are being examined, researched, studied and debated, everywhere. Universities hold international conferences that bring together scholars, teachers, and veteran activists, and those now involved in the world-wide alternative to the globalization movement. The sheer volume of books, articles and periodicals dealing with this decade, in any number of countries, is staggering, yet very little has been published about the Sixties in Canada. This volume is meant to close that gap.

The essays in The Sixties in Canada reflect research material that has been brought together from a rich reservoir of sources, most little-known. The volume analyzes every possible dimension of the decade, always assessing the impact of the Sixties on Canadian society. The range of subjects is sweeping: the flow of ideas, exciting.

The radicals of the New Left, the young men and women who were represented at St. Cateat the this September, differ from their predecessors, not only in the degree of their protest but in its kind. They are a new breed; their immediate roots go back to the radicals of my own generation at college, a decade or so ago: the young people who came to be known as beatniks, cool, withdrawn and negativistic. That generation's radicals expressed their rejection of the standards of the day by escaping from them. The young of the New Left are withdrawn, too. Withdrawal and rejection are what the beards and the dirty words symbolize. But, in contrast to the beatniks, they have re-committed themselves from outside the traditional bounds of society. For the standards they can't accept—standards, as they see them, of materialism and conformity.

—Peter Gzowski, “The New Left,” Maclean's, November 15, 1965
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This spring a spate of new books have been published complaining that democracy in Canada is in deep crisis. Surprise, surprise. The subject matter of current concerns range from the centralization of power in the office of the Prime Minister, the marginalization of parliament, the defects of the current electoral system, which elects political minorities to rule like majorities, and recognizing political parties as instruments first and foremost aiming at power, and the shutting out of electors in between elections. All the more reason to turn our attention to the 1960s in Canada and to study what happened and why.

Recall that early in the decade the new radicals here and elsewhere had concluded that liberal democracy was in crisis and referred to it as a “consenting democracy.” They had concluded that the dominate political institutions throughout society had lost legitimacy. Instead, the new radicals moved boldly away from all centralization of power and called for a participatory democracy. “All power to the people,” became the rallying cry of that decade. They practiced new forms of democracy in the movement on a daily basis, while mainstream society and its main political and economic interests looked on nervously, thinking hard of how this movement was to be sidetracked.

Participatory democracy was, and is, the enduring legacy of the sixties. Its impact was such that at meetings of the Trilateral Commission it was clearly stated that too much accommodation and too much democracy had been given over to citizens, and these changes, large or small, had to be clawed back. The new radicals raised the level of social criticism and research in Canada beyond previous generations, especially before and after the 1930s. All forms of authoritarianism were confronted. A popular badge activists wore read “Question Authority.” Corporate liberalism was demystified, while social democracy was found wanting.

It is difficult to recall the early sixties in mood and style. It was an intense period of considerable experimentation in almost every way, hence the “New,” in New Left. The sterility of the Old Left encouraged the New Left to open up questions of both theory and look in a fresh undogmatic matter at “Root and Branch,” as one magazine was named. Radicalism was taken to mean going to the root of a problem, and avoiding patchwork. When unemployment was discussed the very nature of work was questioned. When class was debated the whole range of youth as an agency for social change was raised. When the crisis of the urban question
was placed on the agenda, the relationship between town and country was posed, as was the moral bankruptcy of capitalism, which let loose the ravaging real estate industry and its unqualified promotion of suburbia.

Empire was a major focus of the new radicals, with the dismantling of the U.S. and Soviet power blocks in favour of a third non-aligned association of countries as a goal. In all of these branches of concern, the root cause was thought to be the impotence of our worn-out political institution: the State. What has also not been grasped by enough researchers was, that in Canada, there were three and a half centres of action and intellectual activity. There was Montreal, where it all began, which was very much absorbed by the Left-wing nationalism of the day, with added influences from Britain, France, Germany, Italy and the U.S., with their many schools of thought and grassroots activism, all mixed into the a cultural and political mortar. There was Toronto, with offshoots in surrounding cities, and Kingston was very much influenced by Left-liberalism melded with the instincts of the Old Left and drew from the civil rights movement. There was also Saskatchewan, with its deep-seated CCF/NDP foundations, from which there were attempts at leftwards breakthroughs, and finally the social democratic tendency in Vancouver.

Each one of these centres, more oftentimes than not, analysed reality and its major problems differently. Given these different backgrounds and contexts, and in spite of and because of them, there were noble efforts to hold the movement together in a forward direction.

To those who do not look at the record carefully enough, it is simply wrong to say that the New Left had no programme, but simply a string of assertions. What the New Left was not was a political party or faction. It was a movement, a form that is difficult to understand today given the social fragmentation. The programmatic approach began as early was 1959, with significant policy proposals for new directions in Canadian foreign policy. This then matured into major overviews, manifestos if you will, reflected in a number of books and journals.

Researchers have to search beyond the inadequate and incomplete archival material currently found in the McMaster University collection in Hamilton, Ontario, which has excluded material from the early part of the decade, and which has not sought out the contributions and writings of many veterans who are still about.

The Queen’s University interdisciplinary conference in 2007, “New World Coming: The Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness,” was an imagina-
tive and corrective experience. Canada has matured as an industrial/technological society to be sure, but the Left in this sub-continent of a country has yet to bring itself together even in a common forum of conversation, discussion and debate. While almost every country and continent on the planet has brought thousands together under the umbrella “Another world is possible” in response to the machinations of the World Trade Organisation, International Monetary Fund, and the annual Davos World Economic Forum, to date, no alternative has been dared in English-speaking Canada. Five thousand people gathered from across the province in last year’s Quebec Social Forum, and many hundreds have gathered in five Citizen Summits on the future of Montreal. Activists are busy organising a new social forum in the fall. It is a common understanding here that isolation, fragmentation, must be overcome if alienation and cynicism is to be turned around. Let’s not stop trying, the activists here insist. Hence the importance of this anthology.

Regarding solid scholarship, the investigation of what constituted the movement of the Sixties is crucial to any renewal of both theory and practice. Yet Canada has lagged behind in this work. The volume of investigations on the Sixties that has been, and continues to be, written and published annually in the U.S., Britain, France, Germany and Italy is simply amazing. Indeed, the quantity is hard to understand. In Canada, by comparison, the intellectual productivity has been minor, and this is not because comparable social and political actions did not take place in this country, a popular and self-fulfilling media assertion. A new generation of scholars have come forward with a real passion to dig up the roots of the movement and history in Canada. We can only open ourselves to this much-needed fresh air, and call out to them and others, that more is needed. We must remind all of that well-proven maxim, that at all times, grassroots social and political action for basic change will season research.

_Dimitri Roussopoulos_
_Montreal, August 2009_
Notes


3 *The New Left in Canada*, Dimitri Roussopoulos, editor, Black Rose Books, 1970. Includes essays analyzing activism in every part of Canada, except Atlantic Canada, where the commissioned essay was interrupted. The book concludes with a sweeping overview, “Towards a Revolutionary Youth Movement and an Extra-Parliamentary Opposition in Canada.” The publication of this book, originally contracted by a major Toronto publisher, was followed by country-wide speaking engagements. *Canada and Radical Social Change*, Dimitri Roussopoulos, editor, Black Rose Books, 1973. Includes the definitive critique of Canadian social democracy and moves on with several seminal essays including “Democracy and Parliamentary Politics” by Gerry Hunnius and concludes with a new formulation of the manifesto on an “Extra-Parliamentary Opposition.” Also contributing to this anthology, amongst others, are James Laxer and Arthur Pape, George Grant, Mel Watkins, and Philip Resnick. Not listed here are the many programmatic articles in *Our Generation*, one of the leading international New Left journals, published in Montreal, 1961-1994. Not to be ignored is Myrna Kostash’s book which also attempts a credible perspective for the future.
Introduction

As a member of a new generation of researcher/activist interested in the 1960s, I was invited by Black Rose Books to bring together this selected anthology. It is refreshing to acknowledge the level of interest in this decade, from its inception to its enduring impact on Canadian history.

There is now a growing critical literature, which is welcome, but much remains to be done. There is original work in this book. Some of it was presented for the first time at the Queen's University Conference on the Sixties, but some essays are also original to this book.

The archival material in Canadian university libraries, major public libraries and the National Library in Ottawa are tragically sparse. The large archives of the RCMP, the federal police, and some provincial police, are notoriously unreliable. The educational level, and particularly the political education, of the spies and infiltrators were so low that their reports are hilarious in their inaccuracies. When one compares this reporting with that of the French police in Paris on the mid- to late-19th century on the emerging French Left, the Canadian effort is wanting by far. The volume of these police reports nevertheless is evidence that a great deal was in fact going on in Canada, and international police records also show that the influence of the Canadian New Left was considered important and that it had an impact both in Western Europe and the U.S., particularly through the nuclear disarmament, anti-war and human rights movements.

To follow the role of the young Canadians in helping to organize the first non-aligned, independent international federation of peace organisations to counter the political machines of the pro-Soviet World Peace Council and its U.S. equivalents is fascinating. To read, for example, of the international meetings held in Ljubljana, in August of 1968, around the time of Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia and the planned actions to help the resisters of the military occupation and to organize international solidarity is impressive. How many researchers know that the Canadian New Left organised strategic meetings between the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in West Germany, the SDS in the U.S., and others. I have come across little on these connections in Canada, but found material in the Geneva archives of the International Peace Bureau. All this, and much more, has to be mined for historical insights and for publication.
Myrna Kostash has correctly complained that unlike New Left activists in other countries, the Canadians have, on the whole, been silent. True, many of them have become part of the mainstream, but this alone should not prevent them from writing and publishing. Do we have to simply settle for extensive interviews with some of them? These people are not illiterates. Where are the biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, histories, by the key activists, or even those activists at large? Why the silence? Where are the writings on the Sixties by Anthony Hyde, Mike Rowan, Heather Dean, Liora Proctor, Cathy Wood, Peggy Morton, Joan Kuyek, Jim Major, Arthur Pape, Peter Boothroyd, Jim Best, Robert and Andre Cardinal, Richard Thompson, Jim Harding, Rocky Jones, Pat Uhl, Dennis McDermott, Clayton Ruby, Judy Pocock, Ken Druska, Nick Ternette, Harvey Shepard, Elsa Cohen, Stan Gray, Doug Ward, to mention a few. The list of key activists is long. Or from others activists in the Sixties who were not formally connected to the Combined Universities Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CUCND) and the Student Union for Peace Action (SUPA). Many of these people are now in their late fifties and sixties. We have to wake them up to their obligations to us and to Canadian history. We, the new generation of researchers, are hungry. Some of the veterans are no longer amongst us: Jim Jones, Anne-Marie Hill, Alan Marks, Henry Tarvienen and Matt Cohen.

This anthology has some very outstanding essays. The contribution of Myrna Kostash is a lament for a generation that did not, and does not, take seriously enough reflection and introspection. The contribution of Michael Maurice Dufresne provides new research, especially in the early emergence of the movement, and contains research often missing from the existing literature. The extensive essay by Bryan D. Palmer is a masterpiece by an exemplary historian/activist with an impressive capacity for both research and writing. It appears in a different form in a recently published book, which is extensive. The contribution of Sean Mills is a brilliant piece of original research and analysis, not only filling a large gap in the published literature, but also in the perception of almost all researchers. To understand the complexity and vitality of the movement of ideas and action in an important city like Montreal, with several political and ethnic languages, is truly impressive.

The essay by Marcel Martel, which also appeared in an academic journal after it was presented at the aforementioned Queen’s University conference, highlights, in an impressive manner, how the State security apparatus in Canada understood and misunderstood the movement. John Cleveland brings forcefully to the fore a major campus uprising with widespread ramifications, which he ably
demonstrates as an important rebellion as many other student revolts in other countries. Kevin Brushett’s essay on the Company of Young Canadians fills in some of gaps in Margaret Daly’s book The Revolution Game, which is an incomplete story with serious omissions and factual errors. One insight has to be made, in retrospect, which is that the history of the New Left in Canada would have been entirely different—so different, in fact, that it is impossible even to guess where radicalism in this country might be now—if the Student Union for Peace Action had not been split down the middle over whether to cooperate with this government initiative. Who knows what sort of independent New Left might have developed by maintaining a critical or outright anti-Statist position. Instead, there is still no New Left movement today.

The essays by Kristin Ireland, Pat Smart, Gillian Helfield, Chris Harris and Eric Morton represent new research in various untapped areas of the impact of the Sixties. In revealing the impact of this extraordinary decade on Canadian society, each point of view is unique. But there is so much more to examine. The challenge is not only to cover the full range of events and issues, but also to keep in mind the deep differences of how various parts of Canada took up the goals of the new radicals.

What was the effect of all this activity on the mainstream student movement? The impact on high school students? The Sir George Williams University uprising had international echoes among black communities as far away as the Caribbean islands. McGill University, and the assault on it by Francophone nationalists with the Anglophone Left-wing allies, is an interesting case study also. The consequences on vocational education and the Glendon College affair are to be noted. The rise and fall of student syndicalism emerging in Quebec, how it was articulated in the rest of Canada and the U.S., is a fascinating subject: so are the Forest Hill student protest, from April/May 1969, to the protests in Newfoundland high schools from teacher colleges, to Cecile Rhodes and R.B. Russell Vocation School in Winnipeg.

The seeds of women’s liberation in the late Sixties in Canada is worthy of a major study, to say nothing of the impact of the Sixties on the labour movement—another subject of considerable importance.

To gauge the impact of the counter-culture as it reached well beyond student youth would be a major study. Fifteen hundred workers at Ottawa’s Civic Hospital voted by secret ballot to reject the recommended contract settlement proposed by their bargaining committee; the United Steelworkers staged a four-month strike against the Steel Company of Canada, in 1969, after rejecting a settlement recom-
mended by their negotiating team; B.C. longshoremen, in the winter of 1969-70, re-
jected three separate recommended settlements that kept them on the picket line
for a total of ten weeks. One observer estimated that one out of every seven collec-
tive agreements was overthrown by union members despite recommendations from
the union leadership to accept them because of rising expectations among an in-
creasingly militant number of younger workers influenced by the debate and actions
in society as a whole. A seasoned unionist further observed, “

These young workers are using contract rejection as means of repudiating
what they consider are the injustices of the workplace and of their unions.
We hear a lot these days about the generation gap: it exists between par-
ents and children; between teachers and pupils; between the adult estab-
lishment and youth culture. But there is also a generation gap in the
labour movement.¹

The scope of the Sixties was much wider than is generally thought. Canada is no ex-
ception and lazy journalists who cut and paste nostalgic comments are not to be
taken seriously. For the new generation of researchers, much more remains to be in-
vestigated from any number of angles. Hopefully this book helps this process along.
We need to know more.

M. Athena Palaeologu

Note
Notes on the Contributors

KEVIN BRUSHETT is a professor of history at the Royal Military College of Canada where he teaches courses in the social, political, and foreign relations history of both Canada and the United States. He has published in the area of Canadian urban and social history in the post World War II period. He is currently working on a history of the Company of Young Canadians, a program sponsored by the Pearson government, in 1965, to promote community development as part of Canada’s “War on Poverty.”

JOHN W. CLEVELAND, PhD, teaches social justice oriented Sociology courses at Thompson Rivers University. An activist in a series of 1960s groups including SUPA, Simon Fraser SDU, the Western Voice and En Lutte, he is currently writing a book on the English Canada student movement. He will use his 2010 sabbatical and a wiki-type web site to get former members of the main 1960s and 1970s groups to share in writing interpretative histories of their former groups.

MICHAEL MAURICE DUFRESNE studied history at Carleton University and did extensive research on the 1960s, conducting interviews with several of the principal activists. He entered the PhD programme in history at Queen’s University, but decided not to complete this academic work, choosing instead to work as a writer and editor. Currently, he is working at Library and Archives Canada, in Ottawa.

BARBARA GODARD, Historica Chair of Canadian Literature Emerita of York University, studied at the Universities of Toronto, Montreal and Paris during the 1960s. She has translated a number of Quebec writers and written widely on Canadian and Quebec culture. Her most recent book is Canadian Literature at the Crossroads of Language and Culture (2008).

CHRIS HARRIS is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto (SESE, OISE/UT). Harris is also a longtime organizer in Toronto who has worked with the Black Action Defense Committee (BADC) for eight years. As the program director at BADC, Harris currently facilitates anti-racist youth leadership training and
hip hop healing arts therapy with street-involved youth in gangs in the west end of Toronto. Harris also works closely with BADC elders and former leaders in the Canadian Black Power movement (Dudley Laws, Norman “Otis” Richmond) to engage BADC youth activists in inter-generational learning for anti-racist change.

GILLIAN HELFIELD is a lecturer specializing in Film and Television Studies at York University in Toronto. Her PhD, which she received from the University of Warwick in the UK, was on the topic of Quebecois films of the Quiet Revolution, and she has written extensively on this subject. She is the author of Representing the Rural: Space, Place and Identity in Films about the Land. Prior to embarking on a full-time teaching career, Dr. Helfield worked in the Canadian film and television industry as a free-lance production coordinator and production manager.

ANNA HOEFNAGELS is an Assistant Professor of Music in Carleton University’s School for Studies in Art and Culture. She has trained as an ethnomusicologist, completing her PhD at York University. She has published in The Canadian Journal for Traditional Music, and Ethnologies, and she contributed to, and co-edited Folk Music, Traditional Music, Ethnomusicology: Canadian Perspectives, Past and Present with Gordon Smith.

MYRNA KOSTASH is a Canadian writer and journalist who has written for many magazines including Chatelaine. She is a founding member of the Periodical Writers’ Association of Canada and of the Writers’ Guild of Alberta and has served as Chair of the Writers’ Union of Canada. Kostash is the recipient of several awards. She is the author of Long Way From Home: The Story of the Sixties Generation in Canada.

MARCEL MARTEL is an Associate Professor and holder of the Avie Bennett Historica Chair in Canadian History at York University. A specialist of twentieth century Canada, he has published on nationalism, public policy and counterculture. His recent publications include Not This Time: Canadians, Public Policy and the Marijuana Question, 1961-1975 (University of Toronto, 2006), with Yves Frenette and John Willis, and with Martin Pâquet, Légiférer en matière linguistique (Presses de l’Université Laval et CEFAN, 2008).

SEAN MILLS is currently a postdoctoral fellow at New York University, and holds an MA from McGill University and a PhD from Queen’s University. He has published many articles on Quebec and Canadian history, and is co-editor of the forthcoming collection, New World Coming: The Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness.
ERIN MORTON is an Assistant Professor in the History of Visual Culture at the University of New Brunswick. She recently completed her PhD in Visual and Material Culture Studies in the Department of Art at Queen’s University. Her research examines the intersection of public history with visual culture, tourism, and processes of folklorization in Maritime Canada.

M. ATHENA PALAEOLOGU is a researcher on the Sixties internationally, with a particular interest in Canada. She has participated actively in the international meetings of the European Social Forum and in all the meetings of the World Social Forum and holds a PhD in cultural studies.

BRYAN D. PALMER, PhD, is the Canada Research Chair, Canadian Studies, Trent University, Peterborough. His areas of specialization are labour and social history, and he edits the journal Labour/Le Travail. His most recent book, Canada’s 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era, was published by University of Toronto Press in 2009.

DIMITRI ROUSSOPOULOS is the author and/or editor of some eighteen books including The Public Place (1999), Participatory Democracy (2004), The New Left (2007) and The Rise of Cities (2009). He continues to work for urban democracy, ecological cities and world peace.

PATRICIA SMART is a Distinguished Research Professor of French at Carleton University, and the author of many books on Quebec literature, art and culture. Her feminist study of Quebec literature, Écrire dans la maison du Père, won the Governor General’s Award for 1988 and her translation of it, Writing in the Father’s House: The Emergence of the Feminine in the Quebec Literary Tradition was awarded the Gabrielle Roy Prize of the Association for Canadian and Quebec Literatures. She was an editor of Canadian Forum from 1989 to 1998, was elected to the Royal Society of Canada in 1991, and became a member of the Order of Canada in 2004.