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I strongly doubt if we will ever understand—and fully evaluate—the 60s without placing it against the background of another radical decade, the 30s. Having lived out both periods up to the hilt, I find that my older contemporaries as well as the younger people with whom I worked twenty years ago have seldom been able to distance themselves sufficiently from their time to draw these crucial comparisons adequately. Recent biographies by old New York socialists and communists who lived with such nostalgic exhilaration in the era climaxed by the Spanish Civil War and CIO organizing drives seem utterly estranged and uncomprehending in their attitudes toward the "new left" and counterculture. By the same token, the younger people of '68 and of New York's Lower Eastside and San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury have either romanticized the era of their elders or disdained it as completely irrelevant.

None of these viewpoints and attitudes does justice to the issues that relate these two decades in a strangely symbiotic interaction. We get much closer to the truth, I think, if we recognize that the 60s are particularly significant because they tried to deal with problems that 30s' radicalism left completely unresolved. And both decades lacked a clear consciousness of how these problems

were rooted in the need to create a radical movement *for* the United States. Let me emphasize my remarks on the need for an American movement—a movement that could deal with uniquely American problems and function within a distinctively American context. The failure of 30s' radicalism to meet this need played a major, if negative, role in the emergence of the "new left" and the counterculture of the 60s—this, to be sure, and the special social conditions that marked the postwar era. Ironically, neither generation fully understood the dynamics of its own development in these terms. In both decades, "the movement" collapsed in large part for lack of this understanding, each generation maliciously back-biting the other, drifting in large numbers into the "system" or splintering into a variety of dogmatic sects and exotic academic conclaves that live a largely campus-bound existence.

Let me start this comparison by emphasizing two features about the "red 30s." 30s' radicalism was neither an American movement nor a movement whose "revolution had failed." The word "betrayal" springs much too easily into radical accounts of a movement whose fate was already predestined by the nature of the workers' movement as a whole. For the moment, it suffices to point out that the sizeable communist and smaller socialist parties that gave their imprint to the 30s were rooted in European immigrants who had brought thoroughly exogenous ideas of socialism and anarchism to the United States. The radical periodicals of the 1930s with the largest circulations were published in foreign languages and reflected experiences, often preindustrial and artisan in nature, that were nourished by central, eastern, and southern European problems—problems discussed with considerable insight in Stanley Aronowitz's *False Promises.* A curious mix of issues that had been formed by highly stratified, quasi-feudal societies and a highly incestuous community life was simply transferred to Anglo-Saxon America with its more fluid, libertarian, and individualistic traditions. These two traditions never fused. In fact, to a great extent, they were deeply hostile to each other. Nor

consciousness in practice—and the development of an American radicalism, largely woven from indigenous traditions rather than European, Asian, African, and Latin importations. We do the "third world" no service by ignoring the "first," and we do Europe, restless with anxiety, no service by ignoring America and its utopian traditions.

did the American-born offspring of the European radicals succeed in melding the two. They simply preserved the dualities within themselves without coming to terms with the fairly consolidated outlook of their parents on the one hand and the strangely "primitive" American tradition on the other. Drifting into the academy or into labor unions, they became a self-enclosed clique after the Second War—basically social-democratic, indulgently "pluralistic" (which concealed a deep-seated social schizophrenia) or cold warriors, following in the tow of the Jay Lovestones, Max Schachtmans, and perhaps the most perceptive of the lot, Bertram D. Wolfe—all, larger or smaller lights in the founding years of the American Communist Party.

What helped to conceal this cultural failure of 30s' radicalism from itself were the last great upsurges of the classical workers' movement. Europe, which always had formed the focal point of this 30s' radicalism, was playing out the last stage of an era that began with the French Revolution, unfurled itself with the Parisian workers' barricades of June, 1848, reached its highpoint in the Bolshevik and central European revolutions of 1917–21, and perished in the terrifying bloodbath of the Spanish Revolution of 1936–39. In the years directly following World War II—a war which did not end in a European revolution as the 30s' radicals had so devoutly hoped—"the movement" waited patiently, to no avail, for the 30s to recur. The staggering armamentorium and the restored vitality of capitalism, particularly as revealed by its ability to dissolve the workers' movement of its mythic "historic role" as a revolutionary class, soon made it evident that an entire historical era had passed. The dwindling of the old radical immigrant population merely removed the body politic of that era and left its children stranded—indeed, bitterly resentful of a loss of ideals, organizations, constituencies, and a sense of self-importance that was to surface in the form of incredible arrogance when the 60s movements emerged. This sense of "betrayal" by history, even more than the "betrayals" of Stalin, explains in great part the distempers

of the "old left" and its innumerable defections to liberalism and reaction that preceded the emergence of the "new left."

Almost unknowingly, the young people who entered SNCC, SDS, the counterculture, and many less conspicuous and long-forgotten groups were dealing with the barely visible problem which 30s' radicals had faced but never confronted. Twice removed from the old leftist immigrants—and composed numerically of many young Americans of old ethnic backgrounds—they began to weave a uniquely American populist "agenda" of their own—an "agenda" that could influence Americans as a whole in the "affluent" era of the sixties. This "agenda" stressed the *utopian* aspects of the "American Dream" as distinguished from its *economic* aspects: the eschatological ideal of a "New World," of frontier mutualism, of decentralized power and "participatory democracy," of republican virtue and moral idealism. The American landscape was to be planted with flowers, not paved with gold. Intuitively, these young people knew that a different social configuration, largely populist in character and promising in its abundance of the material as well as spiritual means of life, had replaced the hard, labor-oriented, self-denying vision of proletarian socialism. Perhaps no era in American history seemed more rich with the promise of freedom than the early and mid-60s. Its glow of optimism, more moral than economic and more cultural than political, found its most remarkable expression in the founding documents of the civil rights movement and SDS, particularly *The Port Huron Statement,* which I frankly regard as the most authentically American expression of a new radicalism.

One can adduce many reasons, now conventional features of the retrospective sociology on the 60s' "phenomenon," to explain why this movement declined: the end of the Vietnam War, the desertion by the black leadership of the black "masses," the theoretical and intellectual naivete of the "flower children," the inevitable degradation of the drug culture from an ideology of "mind expansion" into "mind numbness," the commercialization of every facet of the

counterculture, and the "Leninization" of the "new left." Yet, ironically, it may have been the Vietnam war itself, so often regarded as its most important stimulus, that more significantly than any other factor prevented the 60s' movements from developing *slowly, organically, and indigenously* into *lasting, deeply rooted* American phenomena, charged by a deeper sense of consciousness and a more historic sense of mission than it was to achieve. Set against the background of the 30s, the 60s had confronted problems and, in certain respects, begun to resolve issues that a dying era with its dying constituencies could never deal with. Until the Vietnam war had created a 30s-like image of violent insurgency, polarization, and shopworn ideological dogmatism, the 60s was fully indigenous in character. Given time and a deepening of consciousness, it might have spoken to the American people in comprehensible terms and greatly altered the American social climate. That was not to be. Guilt-ridden, literally anti-American rather than anti-imperialist, "third-world" oriented without any sense of the redeeming features of the libertarian elements in the American tradition, the "new left" was literally strait-jacketed by its ideologues into a sleazy Leninism. If this seems like a simplification of an account of the decline of the 60s, we would do well to place it against the background of the 30s. It then becomes evident that what subverted the 60s decade was precisely the percolation of traditional radical myths, political styles, a sense of urgency, and above all, a heightened metabolism so destructive in its effects that it loosened the very roots of "the movement" even as it fostered its rank growth. Having already sounded its death-knell with '68 and after, the American culture which the 60s opposed to the European movements of the 30s could now become faddist, ephemeral, and co-optable, much to the delight, I suspect, of my own dear 30s comrades.

If there are lessons to be learned, aside from those that may be raised by the vast social changes that lie before us, they are the need for organicity of growth, patience in commitment, localism in scale,