

ESSENTIAL LENS

ANALYZING PHOTOGRAPHS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM



Protest and Politics: 1968, Year of the Barricades

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Standards

National History Standards: World History

World History Era 9, Standard 2: The search for community, stability, and peace in an interdependent world

- **Standard 2C**
The student understands how liberal democracy, market economies, and human rights movements have reshaped political and social life.
- **Standard 2D**
The student understands major sources of tension and conflict in the contemporary world and efforts that have been made to address them.
- **Standard 2F**
The student understands worldwide cultural trends of the second half of the 20th century.

World History Era 9, Standard 3: Major global trends since World War II

- **Standard 3A**
The student understands major global trends since World War II

Historical Thinking Standard 2: Historical Comprehension

Historical Thinking Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation

Historical Thinking Standard 5: Historical Issues

Curriculum Snapshot

- Student protests and worker strikes in France
- The “Prague Spring,” the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, and anti-Soviet youth protest
- Student protest in Mexico
- Columbia University student protests

Grade Level

Middle and High School

Classroom Connections

World History, U.S. History, Social Studies, English Language Arts

CCSS for Middle School and High School (grades 6-8, 9-10, and 11-12)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7

Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.9

Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2 and RH.9-10.2 and RH.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.7

Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.5

Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Prerequisite Knowledge

This collection's introduction and background sections help to establish the prerequisite knowledge and set the stage for an examination of protest movements of 1968. Before doing the activities, students should:

- Understand that after World War II, much of the world aligned into two spheres of influence: one dominated by the Soviet Union and a communist ideology, and one dominated by the United States and a democratic and capitalist ideology.
- Understand that after the United States' use of the atomic bomb in Japan during World War II, a nuclear arms race began, resulting in worldwide concern about a possible nuclear war.
- Understand that the Vietnam War was one manifestation of the tension between the communist and democratic/capitalist ideologies and the so-called superpowers' struggle for dominance.
- Understand reasons for the United States' involvement in Vietnam, the home-front strife caused by the war, and the opposition movement.
- Have knowledge of the Civil Rights movement in the United States, including understanding the tactics of the non-violent protest movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and of the more militant Black Power movement.
- Understand that printed daily newspapers, weekly and monthly magazines, radio, and, increasingly, television, were pervasive and popular ways for people to learn about and see imagery and/or video depicting local and world events.

Key Learning Targets

Students will:

- Be able to use photographs as historical documents to understand historical events and social and cultural context.
- Identify some of the circumstances that led student protestors to demand changes in education and government structures in 1968.
- Examine photos for evidence of similarities and differences between protest movements and government response in different countries.
- Be able to describe how both governments and protestors used media to influence public opinion.
- Understand the role of the news media in disseminating information and shaping public perception of contemporary events.
- Identify cause and effect relationships during the chronology of events of 1968.

Essential Questions

- What role do young people and ordinary citizens have in bringing about social, political, and economic change?
- How do protest movements use gestures, symbols, objects, and signage to construct a visual statement of dissent?
- How does the media shape events?
- Are generational differences inevitable?
- Are historical outcomes inevitable?
- Can major shifts in forms of government occur without protest?
- Why does protest bring violent response from local, state, or federal authorities?
- What lasting impact did the protest movements of 1968 have?

Introduction

In 1968 an unprecedented number of youth-led popular uprisings swept the globe in places as disparate as Japan, the United States, Poland, Brazil, Italy, France, Northern Ireland, Czechoslovakia, Mexico, Spain, Germany, Ecuador, Chile, Yugoslavia, and England. Protestors raged against governments from democratic to autocratic—and in each case, the state raged back. Stalwartly, en masse, students demanded change from institutions and leaders who, in return, fiercely fought to maintain the status quo. Why 1968? How could so many young people in so many societies be so angry—and so willing to dissent?

Demographic trends, such as a post–World War II population boom, had created an unusually large cohort of young people. They came of age in a time of unprecedented economic growth and rapid technological innovations. International events, such as the Vietnam War, provided shared provocations for the protest movements of 1968. Another unifying factor was the example of African Americans’ struggle for civil rights in the United States, which lent inspiration and tactics to protestors worldwide. Each movement also had its unique historic antecedents and national circumstances, however—and a particular government response with which to contend. The news media, through its increasing ability to swiftly and graphically cover 1968’s many incendiary happenings—including the protests—transcended the role of chronicler, becoming a force that was shaping history.

Background

Political Developments

The tumult of 1968 exists on a longer continuum of history that included two world wars fought by major European powers, the United States, Japan, and other nations. Key political developments after the World War I included the Russian Revolution, which overthrew the Czar and instituted a communist state; the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire into nations such as Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia; and the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire. The major European powers remained heavily involved in imperial enterprises in colonial outposts, particularly in Africa, Asia, and the West Indies. The United States became a significant player on the world stage.

The 1930s saw the Japanese invasion of China, the rise of fascism in Europe, and the Nazi invasion of multiple sovereign European states, leading to the most global war in history, World War II, which also saw the first use of nuclear bombs, by the United States. The Soviet Union, under Stalin, fought with the Allies against the fascist Axis powers, defeating the Germans and capturing Berlin. After the war, however, tensions mounted between communist and democratic nations, and much of the world aligned into separate spheres of influence of the two emerging “superpowers”: the United States and the Soviet Union. Other political developments included the formation of Israel and the

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division of Berlin into four sectors: British, American, French, and Soviet. World War II helped bring the world out of the economic depression of the 1930s, but left much of the war-torn world facing the challenges of massive reconstruction and the reknitting of family life.

The standoff between the two superpowers became known as the Cold War, though hostilities heated up into bloody and extended conflicts such as the Korean War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the Vietnam War. Colonialism sparked violent conflict as well, such as the Algerian War of Independence, fought between Algeria and France in the 1950s and '60s.

Mexico had gained its independence from Spain in 1821, but would continue to be beset by major conflicts, and, ultimately, entrenchment of single-party power. The 1910 revolution ousted the three-decades-long rule of dictator General Porfirio Díaz but the country soon fell into counterrevolution, with leaders divided against one another and many years of fighting. Mexico adopted a constitution in 1917 and enacted social reforms in the 1920s and '30s and nationalized the oil industry. During World War II, Mexico supported the Allies with raw materials, support flights, and troops.

Mexico benefitted economically from World War II, and leaders in the increasingly urban society continued to fund social programs, such as public health efforts. Mexico was gaining a place on the world stage, and, in 1958, was selected as the site of the 1968 summer Olympic games. The ruling party, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary party), though, had an authoritarian streak, as seen in its brutal crushing of a railroad workers' strike in 1959. Mexicans came to refer to the PRI as “el sistema,” or “the system,” and its centralized power gave monarch-like authority to the president.

The Civil Rights Movement in the United States

One of the main forces that developed in post-World War II years in the United States was the push by African Americans for equal rights. While jurisprudence in the United States was overturning “separate but equal” institutions and mandating equal rights in decisions such as *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), society remained heavily segregated, and blacks suffered from myriad instances of mistreatment, racism, and injustice. In response, a movement took shape in which ordinary citizens staged non-violent protests. In 1954, Rosa Parks, an African American woman refused to give up her seat on a public bus to a white person in Montgomery, Alabama—an act that led to a city-wide bus boycott. In 1960, four university students staged a sit-in at a whites-only lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, a tactic that quickly spread to other cities. The movement was full-blown by the “Freedom Summer” of 1964, in which more than a thousand out-of-state volunteers, mostly young people, went to Mississippi in an organized attempt to register blacks to vote. Some of these activists would go on to participate in the protest movements of 1968.

The non-violent protest movement, based in the South and taking inspiration and leadership from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., often met with police brutality and fierce counter-protest. Neither government action nor non-violent protest tactics were alleviating the discrimination blacks faced or improving the plight of those who lived in poverty. Increasing anger and tension boiled over in events such as the 1965 six-day Watts Riots in Los Angeles in which 34 people died, and multiple race riots in U.S. cities in 1967. In 1968, King was assassinated and the militant Black Power movement gained prominence with a variety of leaders and groups advocating a range of ideas, from separatism to violent revolution. One notable group, the Black Panther Party, favored arming black citizens as a way to challenge police brutality, but also initiated community outreach, such as the Breakfast for Children program in Oakland, California.

The many events and activists of the Civil Rights movement were covered in the media—in newspapers, magazines, and on radio and television—and served as models for other protest movements at home and abroad.

The Vietnam War

In the ongoing Cold War the United States was involved in numerous regions around the world to prevent the spread of communism. Vietnam had been torn by an almost decade-long war with colonial power France and had, at the end of the war in 1954, split into two countries: North and South Vietnam. The United States had been involved in Vietnam during the presidency of John Kennedy in mostly covert operations, with thousands of military personnel and advisors in Vietnam, and some U.S. casualties. Not long before Kennedy's death in 1963, the chaos in Vietnam deepened with the assassination of its President Ngo Dinh Diem and the advances of the Viet Cong into the south. The U.S. government remained fearful that the country and the region would turn communist. In August 1964, President Lyndon Johnson used the alleged attack on a U.S. naval vessel in the Gulf of Tonkin as reason to embark on open warfare. Over the next 11 years, the war escalated: the number of American soldiers in Vietnam rose from 25,000 in 1965 to 543,000 in 1968. The war resulted in almost 60,000 U.S. dead. The United States retreated after the fall of Saigon in 1975.

The Vietnam War became known for many tragic hallmarks: guerrilla-style attacks, rampant bombing, the destruction of Vietnamese villages, large numbers of civilian deaths, the young age of U.S. soldiers, and the high incidence of psychological problems among veterans (what came to be known as post-traumatic stress disorder)—to name only a few.

Another hallmark of the war—one that helped to bring it to an end—was the protest movement that emerged in the United States and spread internationally. University students played a major role in the movement, staging anti-

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war teach-ins, attacking campus ROTC centers, and protesting university connections to industries such as Dow Chemical, producer of the napalm, which U.S. forces used in Vietnam. During 1968, one of the bloodiest years of the war, graphic images and video footage of violence and despair regularly entered people's homes. Protests on campuses and in the wider society ramped up. Around the world, people who opposed the United States' intervention in Vietnam also took to the streets. In Paris and Berlin in February 1968, tens of thousands marched against the war, and in March, the tamer Mexican student movement demonstrated.

Societal Shifts

As important as the unfolding of political events on the national and international scene were the socio-cultural changes that were taking place after World War II. One major factor was a population boom, in which a large generation of people would come of age in the mid-1960s in many European countries, the United States, and Mexico. Population growth was less of a factor in some of the Soviet Bloc countries.

After the war, economies were expanding rapidly, giving people previously unheard of discretionary money to spend on consumer goods. In the West, product manufacturers and services providers lost no time in perfecting marketing that would fuel consumer desire and demand. At the same time, the increasing mechanization of work, including domestic chores, left these younger, wealthier individuals with more leisure time than other generations had known. The GI Bill greatly expanded access to higher education.

In many nations, more and more students were being admitted into the university system, stretching physical capacity to the limit. University years offered many young people a period between adolescence and adult life in the workforce, a time in which many experimented with lifestyles that challenged previous cultural norms and mores. As this new, larger, more diverse generation of students matriculated, they began to question the hierarchical nature of the education system and demand a say in everything from housing to curriculum. They also questioned the appropriateness of academic ties to corporate and military entities. In societies worldwide, this generation also began to doubt the integrity of their governments, and speak out against policies with which they disagreed.

The Media

In the late 1960s, television was undergoing a technological transformation from the use of cameras that shot 16-millimeter film, an expensive medium that needed to be processed before being aired, to videotape. Videotape was cheaper, so more footage could be taken. The year 1968 also saw the first satellite transmission of videotape: for the first time ever an event could be broadcast around the world on the same day it happened. This new ability of TV to

capture and transmit international happenings—in some instances unedited—coincided with catastrophic developments such as the Tet Offensive and record-high numbers of Vietnam casualties. Some twenty million viewers saw broadcasts of the Tet Offensive and, at the war's peak, approximately 600 media representatives were working in Vietnam. TV cameras also became riveted by the spirited, iconoclastic worldwide youth protest movement.

Still photography also played an important role in informing people about this increasingly violent year. In 1968, for the first time, *The New York Times* published multiple photos in a “spread.” The magazines *Harper's* and *Atlantic Monthly* each published an issue focused on the Vietnam War, with graphic imagery. *Time* magazine printed color pictures of dead U.S. soldiers. An NBC photographer, Eddie Adams, took an especially upsetting sequence of photographs depicting the execution-style killing of a Viet Cong by the South Vietnamese Chief of Police.

Photography and television broadcasts were seen around the world by increasing numbers of people. For example, in the United States, TV ownership grew from nine percent to 95 percent of households from 1950 to 1970. At the beginning of the 1960s, about ten percent of Mexican households owned a television; by 1970, 90 percent owned one. TV producers knew that dramatic events “played well” on screen and created a shock value. Protestors quickly learned, too, that outlandish behavior, emphatic slogans, and violence would get the cameras' attention, potentially mobilizing the viewing public.

In countries of the Soviet Bloc media was controlled or monitored by the Communist Party and access to international media was restricted—to greater and lesser degrees in different places. One of the factors that would contribute to Czechoslovakia's volatile 1968 was an unprecedented freedom of the press, and access to Western print media. Another influential force in Czechoslovakia and the rest of the Soviet Bloc was Radio Free Europe, a broadcast service funded by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and run out of Berlin. Created in 1949, Radio Free Europe used émigrés from various communist countries as information gatherers and on-air presenters. Radio Free Europe was intended to win the hearts and minds of those living under communism, but also to gather intelligence from behind the “iron curtain.” Broadcasts covered local news—such as protests—not covered by state-controlled media, as well as international news, sports, and banned music and books. Through RFE, residents of one Soviet Bloc country could learn about protest movements in other countries of the Bloc and in the Western world.

In 1968, people were inundated with images of and information about world events from multiple sources, and the dramatic nature and historic importance of these events was thus continually reinforced. Worldwide, the increasing access to all these forms of media generated a greater level of awareness of events and fostered a cultural consciousness of protest that was infectious.

ACTIVITY 1

Activating Students' Prior Knowledge

Begin the Activity

Ask students what kinds of images come to mind when they hear the term “protest.” Ask them if particular places or countries come to mind. Ask students to talk about what types of conditions or policies and what types of events—historic or contemporary—they would deem worthy of protesting and in what ways. For instance, you might suggest that protestors have used various tactics, from passive disobedience to violence. After undertaking the activities in this collection, you might want to have this conversation again.

Classroom Connection

World History, U.S. History, Social Studies, English Language Arts

Grades

Middle school and high school

ACTIVITY 2

Examining Student Defiance

Learning Targets

- I can examine photographs to identify key similarities and differences related to historic events.
- I can use photos as evidence to describe types of protest tactics.

Background

This activity is designed to bring out the similarities in youth protest tactics in different countries (despite different conditions). It is not important for students to know which photos come from which country.

Begin the Activity

Hand out copies of or project the images. Divide students into small groups or allow them to work independently. Have them examine the photographs and take notes. Ask groups or individuals to describe what they see. Write down or project these responses so everyone can see them. You may prompt students by asking them to describe the people in the photos. What age do the various people pictured appear to be? What types of clothing are they wearing? Ask them to describe the relationship (e.g., physical proximity) between people pictured, and the numbers of individuals pictured. In what type of locations are these events happening? What, if any, weapons are pictured, and who is in possession of them? Have them describe the mood of the photos.

After you document student responses, have a discussion about what you've learned from the images. Have the class assemble a list of questions they have about the events and people pictured.

NOTE: The translation for photo 5056 appears with it in the Appendix.

Classroom Connection

World History, U.S. History

Questions to Consider

- What could compel students to take great risks in confronting forces that were superior in strength to them?
- In what way did student tactics make them strong, and in what way did the tactics make them vulnerable?
- What symbols and gestures used by protestors do the photos depict?
- How did the use of symbols and gestures advance the protestors' cause or actions?

Photographs for This Activity (Appendix, pgs. 32-36)

5001, 5007, 5020, 5056, 5071

ACTIVITY 3

Examining Protest Movements Around the World by Using Photos and Other Sources

This activity includes background information on the four countries covered in this collection. In addition to looking at photographs, students will listen to an audio file (and/or read the transcript), and then read a short book excerpt and some brief first-hand accounts from 1968. You may assign these as homework before the activity, or allow time for this in class.

Learning Targets

- I can examine photographs and written or recorded sources for details to help me understand an event that happened in the past.
- I can describe a historic event to my classmates by using photos and other sources as evidence.
- I can describe similarities and differences between individual protest movements (for extension activity).
- I can articulate issues about which I care (for extension activity).

Background

United States

Protest had a long history in the United States before 1968. The Civil Rights movement, more than a decade old, offered a model of non-violent tactics and had mobilized and organized huge numbers of participants, many of them young people. As opposition to the war in Vietnam grew, citizens had turned out in droves, marching in the streets. And, fuelled by numerous economic and other injustices —such as lack of access to fair housing, education, and jobs—black Americans had staged riots in cities from Los Angeles to Detroit to Newark, to name but a few. In response, urban police departments militarized their forces, in some instances acquiring helicopters and surplus military vehicles. As tumultuous as things had been to date, they would get worse in 1968. As in countries around the world, students in the United States would play a key role in demanding change.

The second week of 1968 set a record for the number of U.S. soldiers killed in Vietnam. The war was costing the country vast sums of money, while polls showed it was becoming increasingly unpopular. The Selective Service announced an increase in the draft rolls. This came on the heels of two prominent figures, child-rearing expert and pediatrician, Dr. Benjamin Spock, and Yale University's Chaplain, William Sloane Coffin, publicly stating that

Classroom Connection

World History, U.S. History, Social Studies, English Language Arts

Photographs for This Activity (Appendix, pgs. 37-53)

United States

5020, 5043, 5046

France

5007, 5008, 5016, 5035, 5059

Czechoslovakia

5001, 5028, 5030, 5067

Mexico

5011, 5013, 5051, 5070, 5071

young men should defy the draft. Those that did faced legal charges. The North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong launched the Tet Offensive at the end of the month, and the chaos and violence of these attacks against South Vietnam and U.S. forces unfurled in front of television viewers in a flurry of news video that the White House had no hope of “spinning.” In February, college students in Boston held a four-day hunger strike against the war. By mid-month, famous TV news anchorman Walter Cronkite would arrive in Vietnam on a tour that would culminate in his televised public expression of severe doubt as to the country’s chances in this war.

By spring, demonstrations on campuses were a common occurrence, with students protesting not only the war but a host of grievances related to outdated rules, narrow curriculum offerings, and ties between universities and military/defense industries, such as Dow Chemical, the manufacturer of napalm. After the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who had recently become vocally anti-war, on April 7, African American uprisings broke out in cities nationwide.

At Columbia University in New York City, students boycotted classes to protest the war and, in April, staged a major takeover of the university. They were angry about the school’s ties to the defense industry, what they regarded as an outdated curriculum, and Columbia’s plan to build a gym on the site of a Harlem neighborhood park. (Non-student Harlem residents were not going to be eligible to use the facility.) On April 23, Columbia’s chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) called a rally and was joined by the Student Afro-American Society (SAS). At the gym construction site, protestors pulled down fences and scuffled with the police. Next, students occupied administrative offices in Hamilton Hall, locking the dean in his office. SAS students stayed in Hamilton and others went on to seize several other buildings. The occupation lasted eight days, during which protestors reached out to the Harlem community, debated protest techniques, talked politics, held film screenings and concerts, and conducted press conferences. There was even a wedding.

When the university called in the New York City Police at about 2:30 in the morning on April 30, mayhem ensued. Officers beat students and dragged them out of buildings. Hundreds were arrested, and the NYC Police Bureau received an unprecedented high number of complaints. Many faculty and non-protesting students now rallied around the activists. Public opinion, previously partial to the administration, was also swayed. Faculty created a board with external leadership to study what had happened. The board determined that University President Grayson Kirk was, in part, to blame. Kirk subsequently suspended SDS leader Mark Rudd and others, leading to another building takeover and battle with police. In August, Kirk took early retirement. Kirk had this to say about events of 1968: “I know of no time in history when the gap between generations has been wider or more potentially dangerous.”

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Students at Columbia would soon closely follow events in May in Paris, as the Parisians had followed protests in New York and elsewhere. A movement that transcended national, political, and linguistic boundaries was underway.

France

In 1968, French students strode onto the world scene and created a French Revolution to rival the country's previous revolutions. This protest movement would set in motion the toppling of long-standing power structures and propel an old world society into the modern era. Like their counterparts around the world, the French rallied around international outrage against the Vietnam War, but students here—and the workers they managed to form an alliance with—were first and foremost expressing their dissatisfaction with France and its outdated institutions, and their actions were rooted in French history and culture.

France had long been one of the world's major powers, and had well-established colonies in Africa and Southeast Asia. In 1940, the Nazi Blitzkrieg brought France to its knees and divided the nation into “occupied” and “free” zones, though Germany controlled both. While some French officials and citizens cooperated with the Nazis and even aided the Nazi's deportation of Jews, there was also a strong French resistance. General Charles de Gaulle, exiled in London, advocated for a Free France against the cooperating “Vichy” government and managed to gain the support of France's colonies and turn public opinion against Vichy and the Germans. De Gaulle and the troops of “Free France” joined the Allied invasion and helped liberate France in 1944. De Gaulle established the Provisional Government of the French Republic and served as Prime Minister for two years.

But France was not to have peace after World War II. The Japanese had occupied Vietnam, or “Indochina,” a French protectorate, during the war. After World War II, the French reoccupied Vietnam and soon were embroiled in a bloody conflict that lasted from 1945 to 1954. This war was deeply unpopular with those in France on the political Left, including writer and cultural icon Jean-Paul Sartre. The turmoil in Indochina laid the groundwork for the U.S./Vietnam War, which many in France would also oppose.

Indochina was not France's only problem. Another hotspot was its colony in Algeria, where an independence movement with many factions had been forming. The agitation would erupt into the Algerian War, which played out in North Africa and, in the form of terrorist “Café Wars,” on the French mainland from 1952 to 1962. Events in Algeria would deeply shake and divide the French people and cause the downfall of the Fourth Republic. With a military coup rumored in Algeria, a coup d'état in France, supported by the French Parliament, installed old stand-by Charles de Gaulle as president in 1958. De Gaulle rewrote the French constitution, giving vast powers to the office of the president, and formed the Fifth Republic. He was officially elected by the people

in 1959. Late that year, de Gaulle spoke publicly for Algerian independence, reversing his previous position. It took three more years to get to a referendum in which people overwhelmingly approved Algerian independence. Throughout the conflict, there had been reports of misconduct on the part of French soldiers, and the war had been unpopular with French intellectuals and the powerful French Communist Party. Along with students, they had opposed the war and staged street protests in Paris.

In the years following the war, France, though finally at peace, was poised for internal strife. As in many other nations, the 1960s saw a rapidly growing economy, a rise in consumerism, and the coming of age of a population boom—about a 30 percent increase in the post-World War II years of 1946 to 1950. There were about 175,000 university students in France in 1958; in 1968, there were 530,000. At the same time that the youth population was expanding, an increased exposure to education, rock ‘n’ roll music, and new consumer products was creating a distinct youth culture, France itself was slow to change. In 1968, Charles de Gaulle was still at the helm of France. Born in the nineteenth century, his autocratic, paternalistic ruling style made the government—and the French university system it maintained control over—seem out of step with the new reality. The system was decidedly “top down,” facilities were inadequate, and students were subjected to huge lecture-style classes with little or no access to professors. Students would be the main force ushering in the end of “Gaullism.”

Students at a suburban Paris university, Nanterre, bordering a poor immigrant neighborhood, would be the first to sound an alarm. A small group of students—angry with the lack of resources and opportunities for discussion and reform, and at single-sex dormitories with few visiting privileges, and no doubt inspired by events in the United States, Italy, and other countries—dubbed themselves Les Enragés (angry people) and began agitating. In January, the police came to break up a small demonstration. This became a regular event. The Vietnam War was a rallying cry for students as well, and opposition to the war was fierce. A university dean refused to advocate for Nanterre students who were arrested at an anti-Vietnam War demonstration that had taken place at an American Express bank on March 20, and were slated to be disciplined by the Education Ministry. On March 22, Les Enragés occupied a faculty space in a university building and gave birth to the “March 22 Movement.”

In early May, one of the Nanterre student leaders, Daniel Cohn-Bendit (“Dany the Red”) was scheduled for a disciplinary hearing related to his protest activities. Students at Nanterre staged a demonstration, stealing loudspeaker equipment from the school. Paris was about to host international peace talks over Vietnam, and de Gaulle’s government was determined to keep law and order. The Ministry of Education closed Nanterre, but instead of stifling the youth movement, this action shifted protest to Paris and the 700-year-old

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Sorbonne. The rector, or head, of the Sorbonne called in the police: 600 students were arrested, and the Sorbonne closed. This incursion into the sacred space of the university angered students and faculty.

The movement ballooned to include students and workers all over France. The government called out the CRS, armed riot police, and on the night of May 10th and into the 11th, protestors waged an urban battle in Paris' Latin Quarter. This has become known as the "Night of the Barricades." Invoking previous periods of revolt in French history, such as the 1871 Paris Commune, protestors pulled up cobblestones to form barricades. They overturned buses and cars, threatening to occupy until the government met their demands: re-open the Sorbonne, release jailed student activists, and remove police from the Latin Quarter. In sympathy and to press for their own demands, the major trade unions called for a general strike. De Gaulle fled the country to reflect on his options. By the end of the month the entire country was shut down, with ten million protesting and on strike.

The events of May 1968 in France are often noted for their violence—the hurling of cobblestones by angry youth, and the use of the club and tear gas by the CRS. But many first-person reminiscences claim that, in equal measure, 1968 was about the French people opening up and talking to each other. The many posters printed by students at L'école des Beaux Arts to adorn city walls portrayed the violence. One depicts a bandaged face with a safety pin on the mouth and the words: "A youth who became unquiet too often." But many of the French slogans of 1968 depicted the playfulness and hope of the student movement. To quote a few: "Under the cobblestones, the beach." "Be realistic: Demand the impossible." "A barricade closes the street but opens a path." The protests of 1968 did open a path for the education system to evolve. In subsequent years, the government dedicated more money to education at all levels and the student experience improved.

Czechoslovakia

The term "Prague Spring" may have a familiar ring, especially due to the coining of the similar "Arab Spring" in the twenty-first century. However, events and circumstances in Czechoslovakia in 1968 are probably less well known than their name. Similar to each of the youth protest movements around the world, the Prague Spring and subsequent resistance to the summertime Soviet invasion was both linked to and distinct from movements in other countries. In Czechoslovakia, citizens of all ages opposed the Soviet invasion and supported their internal government's reform intended to create "socialism with a human face." As in other countries, however, students and artists were primary agents of change by calling for reform and were fearless defenders of their beliefs in the face of Soviet aggression.

Czechoslovakia became a country in 1918 amid the shifting of national borders in Europe after the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Czech and Slovak regions, ethnically distinct, formed an uneasy union. Following the Soviet liberation of Czechoslovakia from Nazi occupation during World War II, the country's Communist Party nationalized banks and major industries, and—in tone and politics—took its lead from the Soviets. Though popular sentiment was pro-Socialist, the country was not prepared for the brutal Stalinist “Sovietization” that began around 1948, in which hundreds of thousands of dissenters were imprisoned and persecuted. Even after Stalin's death in 1953, Soviet Bloc countries remained oppressed. Czechoslovaks and others watched as Soviets crushed the unrest in Poland and the Hungarian revolution in 1956.

Czechoslovakians wanted a say in the running of their country. Membership and participation in the official Communist Party was high. This fostered an atmosphere of debate and openness leading into the 1960s. Also, Prague was becoming a tourist destination. American poet Allen Ginsberg visited in 1965 and was crowned in a ceremony celebrating the first of May, traditionally a workers' holiday. The country was becoming known for its writers and artists, such as playwright Václav Havel and filmmaker Miloš Forman.

The Writers' Congress in 1967 openly disagreed with state attempts to control freedom of expression. This coincided with a growing awareness among students that they wanted more from their schools and from their government. In 1967, students in Prague staged a small protest about heating and lighting in dormitories. They were crushed by the police. About 50 students were hospitalized. To the young idealists, many of whom believed in socialism and believed they had the right to speak out to make society a better place, this was shocking and unacceptable.

After this event, students began creating and distributing leaflets. Their actions were infectious, causing open discussion in the streets and factories. People asked for free elections. Prague Radio publicly criticized the censorship to which it submitted itself. Television programs began airing political debates.

In 1968, Alexander Dubček became head of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party. The Soviets had seen nothing in Dubček that concerned them. Dubček would go on to propose an “Action Program” in April, however, with the intent of creating a “Socialist Democracy.” The breezes of the Prague Spring of 1968 blew in on this program, and on the pages of Western newspapers sold in a cafe that opened in historic central Prague. Czechs could read about the Soviet crackdown of student protest in Warsaw, of the increasing death count in Vietnam, and more. The Czech press itself was also daring to expose government corruption and openly ridicule the Soviets.

Moscow, feeling the entire Communist alliance was threatened, was infuriated. Soviet leader Brezhnev called a meeting of the Warsaw Pact nations, and demanded that the Czechoslovakian Communist Party control all mass media and stifle the dissent. But the Czechoslovakian people had spoken. Though Dubček assured Moscow that his nation did not want to break from the alliance with the Soviet Bloc, he asserted that “the overwhelming majority of the people of all classes and sectors of our society favor the abolition of censorship and are for freedom of expression. The Czech Communist Party is trying to show that it is capable of a different political leadership than the discredited bureaucratic-police method.”

Just before midnight on August 20, 1968, Soviet and Warsaw Pact tanks crossed the borders into Czechoslovakia. “Operation Danube” was the name of the tactical aggression that brought some 500,000 troops into Czechoslovakia. Dubček, in a government building, watched as the soldiers opened fire on an angry crowd and decided that trying to resist the massive invading force would cost more lives—and give credence to the Soviet claim of counterrevolution in Czechoslovakia. He appealed to militia and citizens alike to remain calm and peaceful.

By the end of the first day, more than 20 Czechoslovakians were dead, and Dubček and his colleagues had been kidnapped and taken to Moscow. But the defiant Czechs had managed to get some live television footage out of the country. In Mexico, Japan, the United States—all over the world—students and others demonstrated on behalf of Czechoslovakia. There was even an unprecedented protest in Moscow’s Red Square.

For the most part, Czechoslovakians did remain peaceful during the months of the Soviet occupation. People used many non-violent tactics: They removed or moved road signs, confusing Soviet troops. They tried engaging the youthful invading soldiers in philosophical conversations. They staged sit-ins and roadblocks. They also relied on any radio broadcasts from beyond their borders that they could pick up, despite jamming equipment used by the invaders.

Moscow’s strong-arm tactics eventually forced Dubček and the Czechoslovakian Communist Party to sign an agreement leading to “normalization,” which was a return to Soviet domination and repression. By the end of the year, hope for reform was dashed, but students remained active, joining the Communist Party in droves with the hope of reforming from within, and staging a 100,000-person-strong, nationwide, three-day sit-in strike, with support from workers, to protest the undoing of the Prague Spring. It would be another 20 years before the country would once again push, peacefully, for its freedom. It would succeed in the “Velvet Revolution.”

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Mexico

In 1968, Mexico was poised to show the world that it was among the most accomplished and important nations, with a growing middle class, robust agriculture and industry, and idyllic tourist destinations. The Olympic Games were to be held in Mexico City, and, for the first time ever, the live TV broadcast would be in color. But in the months leading up to the October world-sporting event, the student protest movement and the government's brutal response would expose some less desirable truths about the country. As in many other countries, youth in Mexico were dissatisfied with governmental policies, and they weren't afraid to speak out—with disastrous consequences.

Having gained its independence from Spain in the early nineteenth century, Mexico continued to face internal and external struggles. These included the Maya uprising and Yucatán's constant succession attempts. U.S. President James Polk, bent on expanding U.S. territory, used reports of a skirmish in territory he claimed as American to persuade Congress to declare war in 1846. The technological superiority of U.S. weaponry ultimately sealed Mexico's defeat two years later, resulting the loss of about one-half of its territory. The U.S.-Mexican War was the first to be photographed. After the war, Mexico was a nation in turmoil, with conservatives advocating a return to monarchy and strict ties to the church while liberals preferred an American model.

Eventually, Mexico settled into an authoritarian regime, with three decades in power for General Porfirio Díaz. In 1911, rebels seized power, and 30 years of revolution and counterrevolution ensued. Pancho Villa, Emiliano Zapata, and Lázaro Cárdenas are some of the national heroes from this time. Muralist Diego Rivera's work portrayed some of the optimism of the revolutionary period of 1910 to 1946. Mexico supported the Allied Forces in World War II, and many Mexicans went to the United States during the war as legal "braceros," working in jobs vacated by American soldiers. The braceros sent money back to families in Mexico, creating a class of wealthier, more-consumerist Mexicans.

The 1950s saw a number of changes in Mexico, including women's suffrage (1953) and rapid population growth. Though successive presidents were implementing social programs and nationalizing industry and utilities (to the chagrin of Mexico's neighbor to the north), the country was under single-party rule, and there was an ever-increasing gap between the wealthy and the poor. Mexicans on both ends of the political spectrum became unhappy with the ruling party, the PRI, which didn't approve of political dissent or strong unions. In 1959, the PRI broke a railroad workers' strike and jailed the popular union leader Demetrio Vallejo. In 1964 and 1965, under President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, they crushed a doctors' strike.

Students at Mexico City's National Autonomous University (UNAM) and National Polytechnic University, and other Mexicans disagreed with government expenditures related to the upcoming Olympic games. Instead, they believed the government should be making societal improvements and aiding the country's poor. Additionally, Mexican students had the examples of revolutionary heroes Fidel Castro and Che Guevara—and they were also aware of student unrest in the United States, France, and around the world. When fights broke out between rival student gangs at the UNAM, the Díaz Ordaz government sent in the military to squelch the outburst. This violation of the university, supposed to be autonomous, propelled students into action.

Student groups organized and staged numerous nonviolent demonstrations, staged street theater to disseminate political views, and posted a list of demands that included freedom for political prisoners and for students who had been arrested in the clash with police, redirecting of Olympic funds to public housing, and restoring the universities' autonomy. One after another, student actions evoked violent response. Students occupied school buildings to protest, only to be met with more force.

A National Strike Council had been formed and organized marches. One, in August, drew a half-a-million people; many other Mexicans joined the students in peacefully protesting their autocratic government. Díaz Ordaz, believing that foreign communist forces were instigators in the unrest and determined to project a sense of authority and control leading up to the opening of the Olympics on October 12, became increasingly hostile to the protestors.

On October 2, several thousand demonstrators came together in the Plaza of the Three Cultures, also called by the Aztec name Tlatelolco. There was a huge military presence, including helicopters overhead. Initial gunfire frightened the crowd, which tried to disperse but was met with bayonets and more shooting. On a balcony from which speakers had faced the crowd, protestors were held at gunpoint by military and watched as shots were fired into the crowd below. People were beaten, arrested, and killed, and bodies were dragged away. On orders from Díaz Ordaz's government, the press covered up the extent of the government-authorized brutality. To the present day, it is not known how many people were killed at Tlatelolco. At the time, the British newspaper *The Guardian* estimated 325. Press coverage focused more on the Olympic Games than on the tragedy at Tlatelolco.

At the time of the massacre, only a single Mexican official publically objected. This was Octavio Paz, the famous poet and essayist who was then the Mexican ambassador to India. A year after Tlatelolco, lecturing in the United States, Paz compared the student movement in Mexico to the movements of students in the Soviet Bloc countries and other places where democracy did not exist.

**Additionally,
Mexican students
had the examples of
revolutionary heroes
Fidel Castro and
Che Guevara—and
they were also aware
of student unrest in
the United States,
France, and around
the world.**

Begin the Activity

Using the background provided, create one fact sheet per country, and divide the class into country groups. Give each group the fact sheet and photographs for their assigned country, as well as the first-hand accounts and excerpts. Instruct the groups to read over the fact sheets, and then discuss each photo and source in light of the country's particular situation. Next, reorganize students into new groups. In each group, one or two students should represent the individual countries. Students present their country to the rest of their group.

Note: Translations for foreign-language words appear with the caption information for the images from France and Mexico.

Photograph **5008**, of a large strike on a Parisian street, depicts marchers carrying banners that state the names of numerous unions in France. While there is no translation for this photo, you may want to point out to students that one marcher carries a sign saying “40 heures toute de suite,” which means “40 hours immediately.” This is a demand to reduce workers’ hours to 40 per week.

Instructions for Using the First-Hand Accounts and Excerpts (See Appendix Pages 54-66)

United States

Mark Rudd was an activist in the Students for a Democratic Society chapter at Columbia University and one of the leading figures in the occupation of university buildings that spring. He went on to be part of the controversial Weather Underground, which sought the overthrow of the U.S. government. Rudd created this well-crafted response to Columbia University President Grayson Kirks’s comments, accusing youth of rejecting all forms of authority and their having “taken refuge in nihilism.” Rudd sent “An Open Letter to President Kirk from Mark Rudd.” In the letter, he vehemently refutes Kirk’s claim that students lack values, and he accuses Kirk and contemporaries of injustices, including sending young people to Vietnam as “cannon fodder.”

France

Have students read the sources from France. To understand the mindset of 1968, it’s helpful to hear the voices of those who were present during this tumultuous time.

Questions to Consider

- What role did generational differences or expectations play in the protest movements in these countries?
- What types of political ideologies inspired student activists?
- How did educational institutions and government forces respond to protestors?
- What kind of alliances did student groups seek?

Czechoslovakia

Give students selected excerpts from *The Czech Black Book: An eyewitness, documented account of the invasion of Czechoslovakia*.

The excerpts include two leaflets found during the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and a street scene as printed in a local newspaper.

One leaflet by university students eloquently expresses outrage at the Soviet invasion. Another invokes Czechoslovakia's history of invasion to condemn the current oppression. A third source shows students the inner-workings of the Czech government that opposed Soviet intervention. A fourth, brief selection is a whimsical press statement that encourages Czech citizens to be optimistic in the face of invasion.

Mexico

Students may either listen to a radio broadcast or read the transcript (provided in the appendix) of "Mexico's 1968 Massacre: What Really Happened?"

This radio feature was produced by Joe Richman and Anayansi Diaz-Cortes of Radio Diaries. Individuals who participated in the student protest movement or who witnessed events in Mexico City in 1968 give meaningful, reflective first-person accounts.

Alternate Activity

Have individual students write essays about events in one country, citing photos and sources.

Extension Activities

1. After the small groups have met, ask students as a class to talk about what the protest movements in these four countries had in common and the ways in which they differed. As needed, prompt them to discuss ways in which students created messages, the tactics they used, and so on.
2. Contemporary Extension: Have students write a formal letter that explains their own beliefs, values, or concerns, and proposing solutions or making demands, to a person or institution in a position of power. For instance, students might choose to craft an argument against a dress-code policy, a city curfew for underage people, a military tactic, or something else.

ACTIVITY 4

“On Assignment”

Learning Targets

- I can assume the perspective of someone who lived through the events of 1968.
- I can select photos to tell a story and write captions.
- I can examine photos for elements such as vantage point and tone.
- I can formulate questions about events, leaders, and student involvement in the protest movements.

Background

Previously provided background and sources are relevant to this activity.

Begin the Activity

Give students the choice of the following assignments:

- You work for the Columbia University student paper and are sent to document the events in April 1968.
- You are a photojournalist for the French paper *Le Monde*, charged with covering events in Paris in May 1968.
- You are an American sportswriter, sent with your pen and camera to cover the Olympics in Mexico City in 1968. You arrive early and find yourself covering, instead, the Tlatelolco Massacre.
- It is August 1968, and you are a photography student living in Prague. The Soviets have just invaded, and you know the borders will soon be closed. You want to interview people and take pictures as evidence and smuggle them out to the Western press.

In each instance, students (individually or in pairs) use the *Essential Lens* project archive to create a photo essay that describes the events in their chosen location. Provide clear guidelines, such as suggesting they choose a specific number of photographs to become a short photo essay that would appear in a magazine or newspaper. Give them time to think about the effect they are creating by the types of photos, the point of view or setting of the photos, the sequence of the images, or the caption they write. Have students give the essay a title. You or your students can review the “Focus In” feature on the *Essential Lens* website,

Classroom Connection

World History, U.S. History, English Language Arts

Questions to Consider

- What is the role of the photographer (or journalist or narrator)?
- What questions do photos answer? What questions do they raise?
- To what extent is a photograph objective?

Photographs for This Activity (Appendix, pgs. 32-53)

Students may choose from any of the photos in this collection.

which provides methods on how to closely examine photographs for detail. Instruct students to end their photo essays with three to five questions they have about the events that they can't learn from the background information or photos. You may have them suggest ways they would have tried to answer those questions had they been around in 1968 and ways they could get answers today.

Extension Activities

1. Ask students to be “on assignment,” creating a comparative photo essay on events in all four countries.
2. If a student has a particular interest in one of the countries not covered in this collection (perhaps because of a familial tie to that place)—such as Spain, Brazil, Greece, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Italy, etc.—have the student research events and images from that place.

ACTIVITY 5

Create a Classroom Timeline or Visual Thinking Wall About 1968

Learning Targets

- I can identify when key youth protests happened around the world.
- I can ask and answer questions about cause and effect relationships.
- I can think about world events as interrelated.
- I can use photos and other historical sources to examine the role of different historical “agents,” from individuals, to groups, to nations.
- I can reach judgments about how I would have acted if I were an 18-year-old student in 1968.

Background

The Introduction, Historical Background, and previous Activity Background sections are all relevant to this activity.

See Appendix, pgs. 67-73, “Timeline of World Events in 1968” for additional background context on events taking place around the world in 1968.

Classroom Connection

World History, U.S. History, English Language Arts

Questions to Consider

- How would I have acted if I had been a student in 1968? What types of issues would I have protested, if any, and what tactics would I have used and why?
- How can a common cause unite disparate groups of people?
- Would the protest movements of 1968 have been as widespread without the media coverage, especially television?
- What role did government and institutional response have in intensifying the protests?

Photographs for This Activity (Appendix, pgs. 32-53)

Students may choose from any of the photos in this collection.

Begin the Activity

If you have the space in your classroom or other location, tape up a long piece of butcher (or other) paper on a wall, or stretch it out along a floor or table. Ask students to divide up the length of the paper into 12 sections, one for each month of the year 1968. You should come prepared with small sticky notes (and, if possible, with images) to place at intervals that represent important world events not covered in this collection. For example: the Tet Offensive in Vietnam, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., International Student meeting in Germany, protests at the U.S. Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Vietnam “Peace Talks” in Paris, the black power salute at the Olympics in Mexico City, and so on. (You may refer to the “Timeline of World Events in 1968” for ideas of what to include.)

Divide the class into groups. If your students participated in Activity 3: Examining Protest Movements Around the World Using Photos and Other Sources, they can regroup into the four countries they previously represented. Using printed photos from the archive, have students populate the timeline, taping up images with dates, and writing brief captions. As a class, go through the year and have students briefly remind each other of significant events and people. Be prepared to describe the events you posted. As you move through the year, discuss.

Extension Activity

Talk about events that included demonstrations or protest in the world over the past calendar year, or in a recent year.

Essential Lens Video Connections

- Watch **A Closer Look** to learn more about analyzing photographs.
- Watch the **Story** video to view a middle school teacher conducting a modified activity from this collection, as well as an interview with National Geographic photo editor Pamela Chen, and photographer Danny Wilcox Frazier.

References and Further Reading

Books

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Poniatowska, Elena. *Massacre in Mexico*. Columbia, MO and London: University of Missouri Press, 1975.

Preston, Julia, and Samuel Dillon. *Opening Mexico: The Making of a Democracy*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004.

Ross, Kristin. *May '68 and Its Afterlives*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Television, Film, Websites

“Vietnam: A Television History”

A public television special and online resources about the Vietnam War.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/vietnam/>

“The Chicago 10”

A public television special, website, and classroom materials about protests at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago.

<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/chicago10/>

NPR Radio series “Echoes of 1968”

Excellent coverage of multiple events of 1968, from student protests in various countries to the assassination of Robert Kennedy, to the Apollo Eight mission.

<http://www.npr.org/series/89372462/echoes-of-1968>

BBC: On This Day

This website allows users to search particular days and years for BBC content including video, photographs, audio, and text on historic events. There are entries for some of the countries covered in this collection, as well as other events from 1968. Just a few examples are:

“Russia Brings Winter to Prague Spring”

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/21/newsid_2781000/2781867.stm

“Workers Join Paris Student Protest”

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/may/13/newsid_2512000/2512413.stm

“Student Riots Threaten Mexico Olympics”

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/october/2/newsid_3548000/3548680.stm

Photographer Pedro Meyer’s website chronicling Mexico City in 1968

<http://www.pedromeyer.com/galleries/mexico68>

The Goethe Institut’s “1968 Worldwide”

This website, created by a German cultural organization, features several interviews with people who participated in protests in 1968 in countries around the world.

<http://109.68.50.141/ges/pok/w68/enindex.htm>

The National Security Archive, The George Washington University
This website's "electronic briefing book" provides declassified U.S. government documents related to U.S.-Mexico relations and events leading up to and following the Tlatelolco massacre.

<http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB10/intro.htm>

Global Nonviolent Action Database

This website, created by students and faculty at Swarthmore College, presents an overview of events in Mexico City in 1968.

<http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/print/content/mexican-students-protest-greater-democracy-1968>

Teaching a People's History: The Zinn Education Project

This website supports the use of historian Howard Zinn's book *A People's History of the United States* and includes resources about the Tlatelolco massacre, such as Mexican poet Rosario Castellanos's poem, "Memory of Tlatelolco" (print and Spanish audio).

<http://zinnedproject.org/2014/10/tlateloco-massacre/>

Mai-68.FR

This website is in French, but presents numerous photographs from 1968, including images of the many "affiches de mai" — posters from the protest movement.

http://www.mai-68.fr/galerie/cat.php?val=2_jean-pierre+rey+regard+sur+mai+68

Columbia 1968

This website was created as part of a conference held in 2008 on the 40th anniversary of the student protests at Columbia University. There are numerous first-person remembrances and other resources, such as links to articles written in the mainstream press at the time of the protests.

<http://www.columbia1968.com/>

Columbia University 1968

This website offers a first-person remembrance of events at Columbia in 1968. It is not affiliated with the university.

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/computinghistory/1968/>

About Mark Rudd

<https://exhibitions.cul.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/1968/item/5524>

APPENDIX

Activity 2

pgs. 32-36

5001, 5007, 5020, 5056,
5071

Activity 3

pgs. 37-53

United States

5020, 5043, 5046

France

5007, 5008, 5016, 5035,
5059

Czechoslovakia

5001, 5028, 5030, 5067

Mexico

5011, 5013, 5051, 5070, 5071

*NOTE: First-hand Accounts
and Excerpts pgs. 54-66*

Activity 4

pgs. 32-53

Students may choose from any
of the photos in this collection.

Activity 5

pgs. 32-53

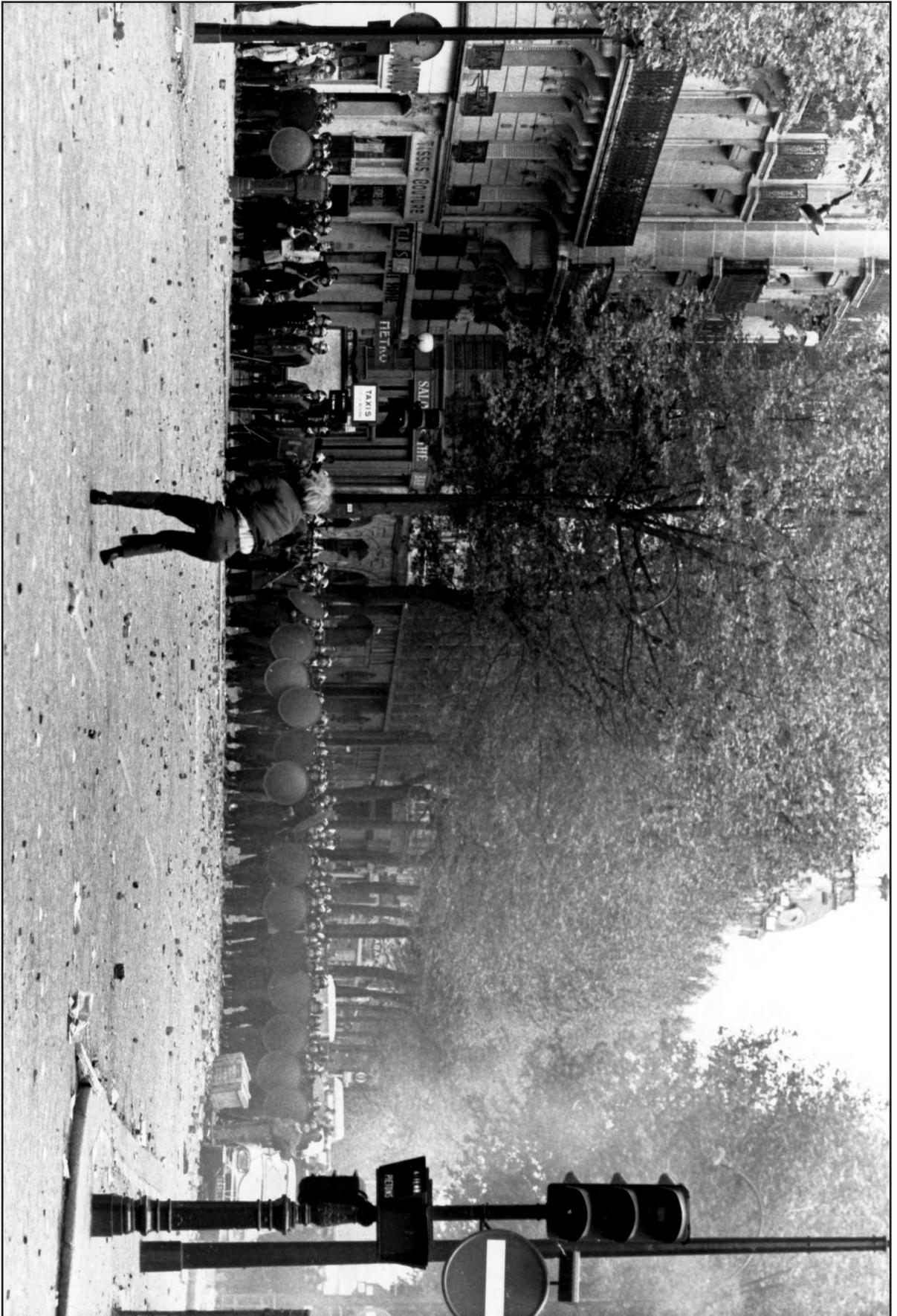
Students may choose from any
of the photos in this collection.

NOTE: 1968 Timeline

pgs. 67-73



Activity 2 - 5001 - This young Czech girl lets her feelings be known as she shouts "Ivan GO Home!" to soldiers sitting on tanks in the streets of Prague. August 26, 1968. Prague, Czechoslovakia. (Bettmann/Corbis/AP Images)



Activity 2 - 5007 - A student throws stones at police in Paris, France, during a student strike.
May 1968. Paris, France. (Guy Kopelowicz/AP Photo)



Activity 2 - 5020 - Scholarly behavior included such things as demonstrations, confrontations, and sometimes ended in violence. At Columbia University in April, a professor finds an entrance blocked during student sit-ins. Students took over four buildings during a big protest demonstration. New York City police were called in to get some out of the buildings. April 1968. New York, New York. (Betmann/Corbis /AP Images)



Activity 2 - 5056 - 3th arrondissement. Rue Beaubourg. Students and workers demonstrating from Place de la République to Place Denfert-Rochereau (14th).
Moy 13, 1968. Paris, France. (@ Guy Le Querrec/Magnum Photos)

Translation Note: The signs read: "The riots of Algiers brought De Gaulle to power. The political fight and the barricades have caused his demise and will bring his downfall."



Activity 2 - 5071 - Students carry a large banner of Cuban revolutionary Che Guevara during a demo against the government.
1968. Mexico City, Mexico. (@ Abbas/Magnum Photos)



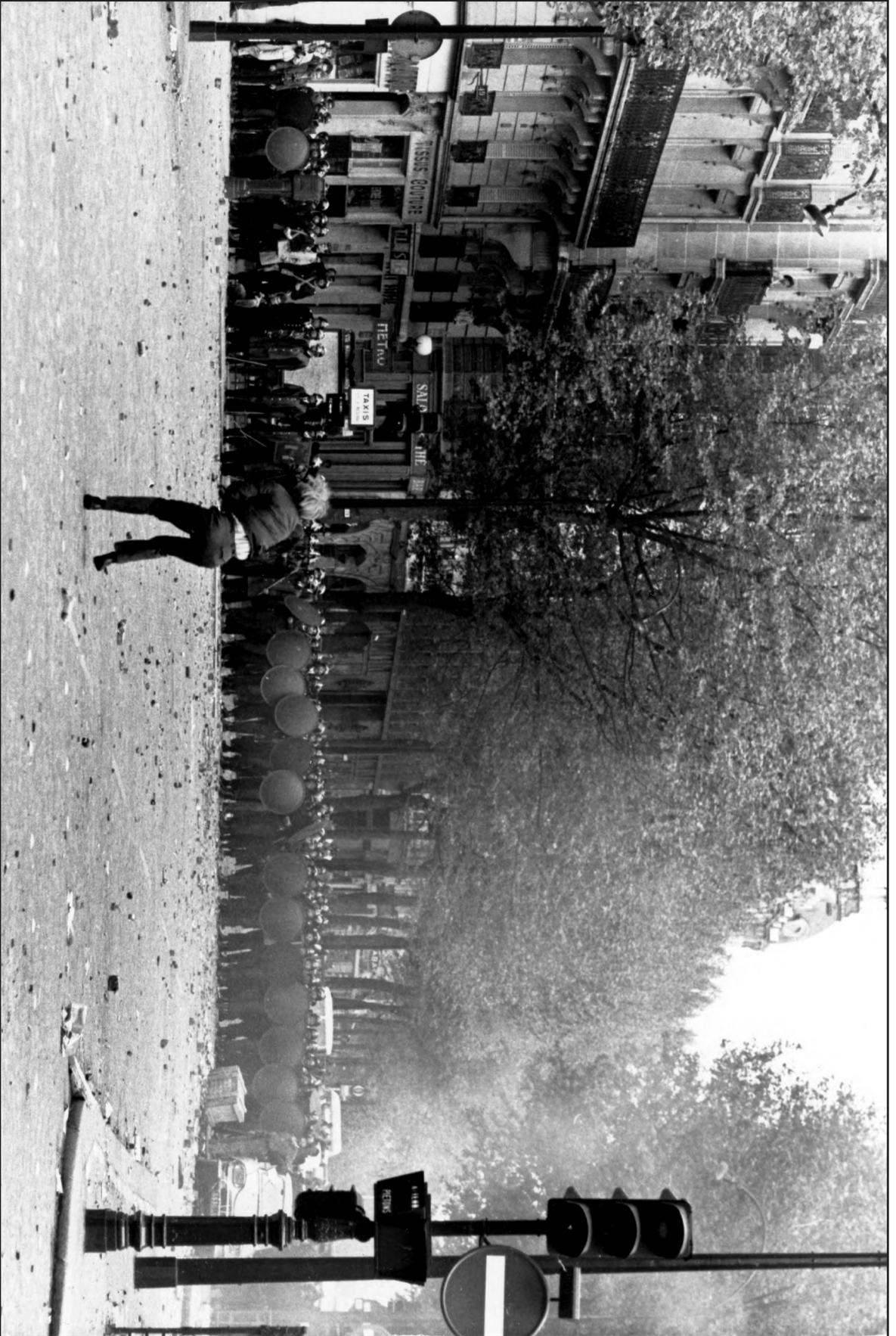
Activity 3 - United States - 5020 - Scholarly behavior included such things as demonstrations, confrontations, and sometimes ended in violence. At Columbia University in April, a professor finds an entrance blocked during student sit-ins. Students took over four buildings during a big protest demonstration. New York City police were called in to get some out of the buildings. April 1968. New York, New York. (Betmann/Corbis /AP Images)



Activity 3 - United States - 5043 - Two policemen lead the way as they are assisted in forcibly removing a Columbia University Co-ed from a besieged campus building. Acting at the request of the University's Board of trustees, police began evicting some 500 rebellious students who have occupied campus buildings for seven days in a protest against university policy. April 30, 1968. New York, New York. (Bettmann/Corbis/AP Images)



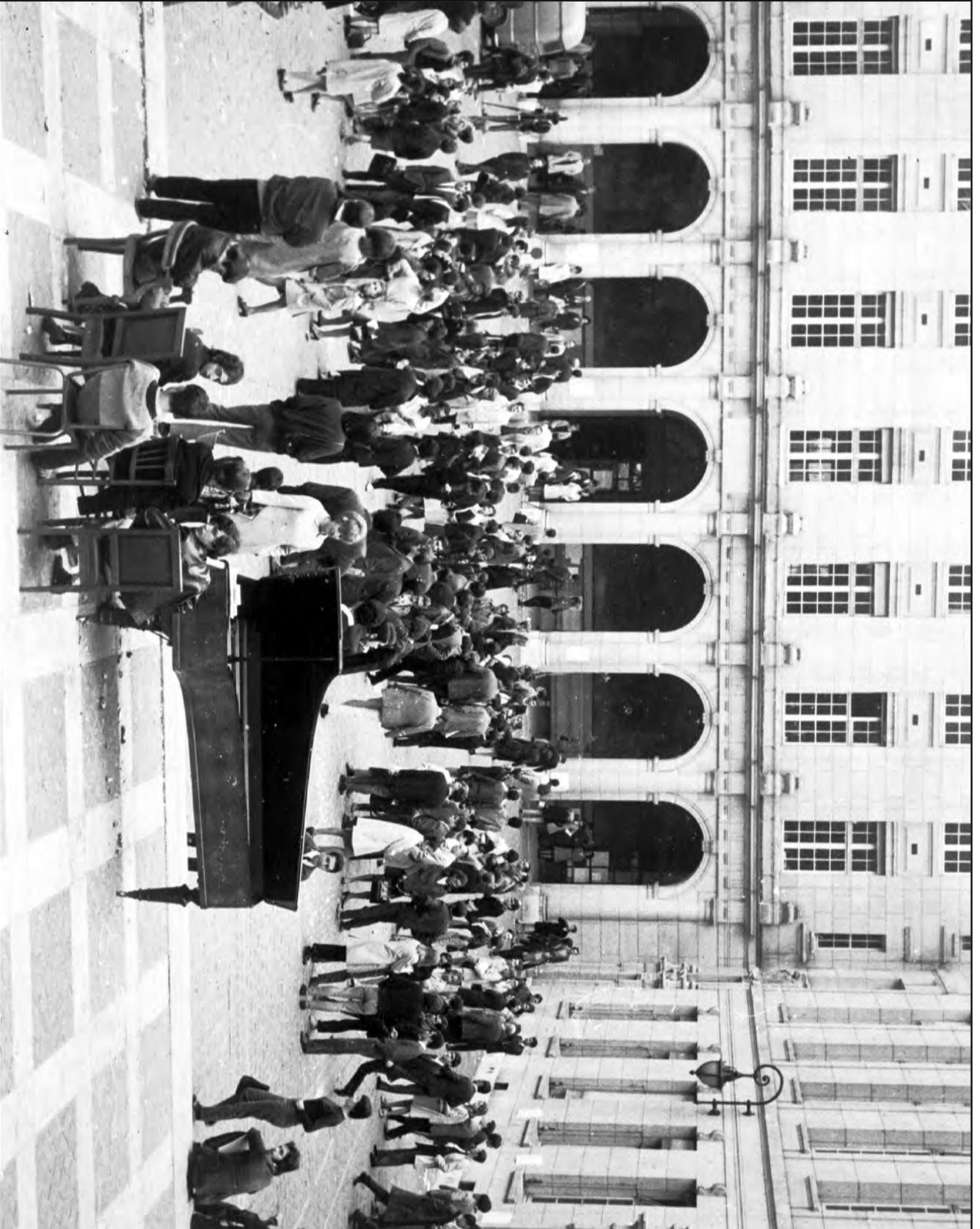
Activity 3 - United States - 5046 - People protest Columbia University's plans to construct a gym.
April 1968. New York, New York. (Image by © Steve Schapiro)



Activity 3 - France - 5007 - A student throws stones at police in Paris, France, during a student strike. May 1968. Paris, France. (Guy Kopelwicz/AP Photo)

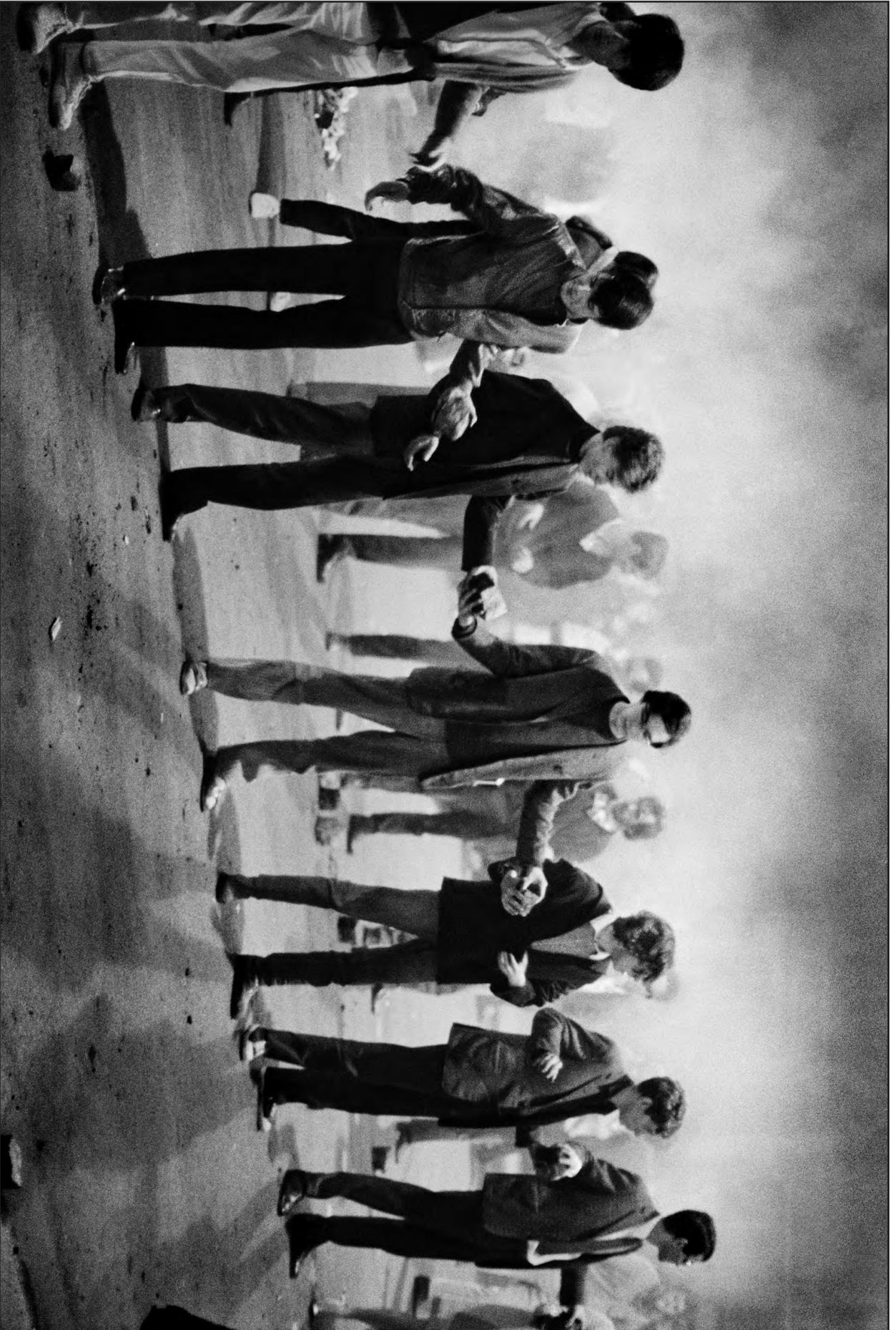
Activity 3
France
5016

A piano stands
unattended after
an all-night jazz
concert inside
the Sorbonne
University, as
students occupy
the building for
the second day,
May 14, 1968.
Paris, France.
(AP Photo)





Activity 3 - France - 5035 - *French Riot Police Behind Stone Barricade.*
May 11, 1968. Paris, France. (Bettmann/Corbis/AP Images)



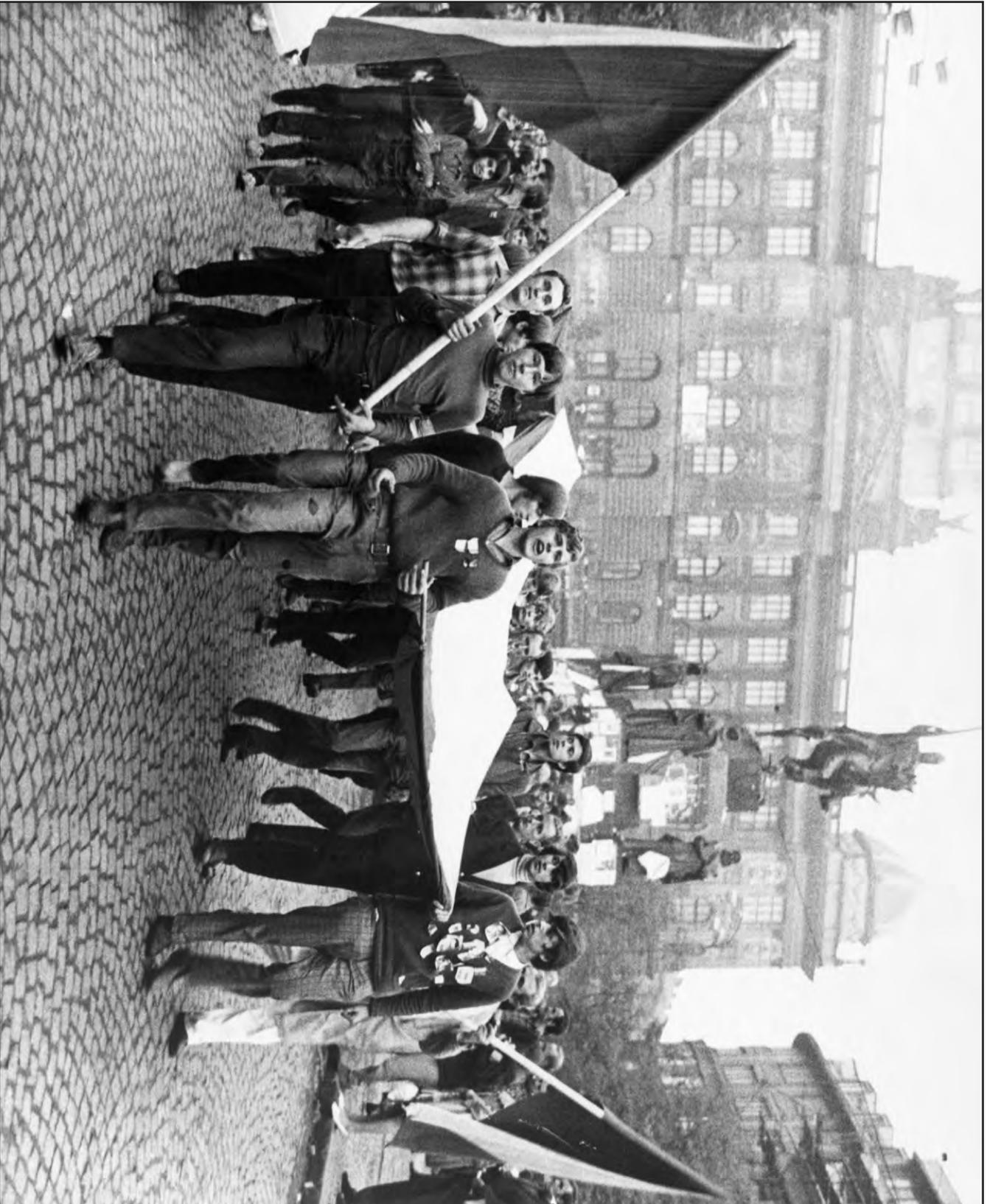
Activity 3 - France - 5059 - 5th arrondissement: Students in a chain passing cobble stones for the barricades, Gay Lussac Street. May 10, 1968. Paris, France. (@ Bruno Barbey/Magnum Photos)

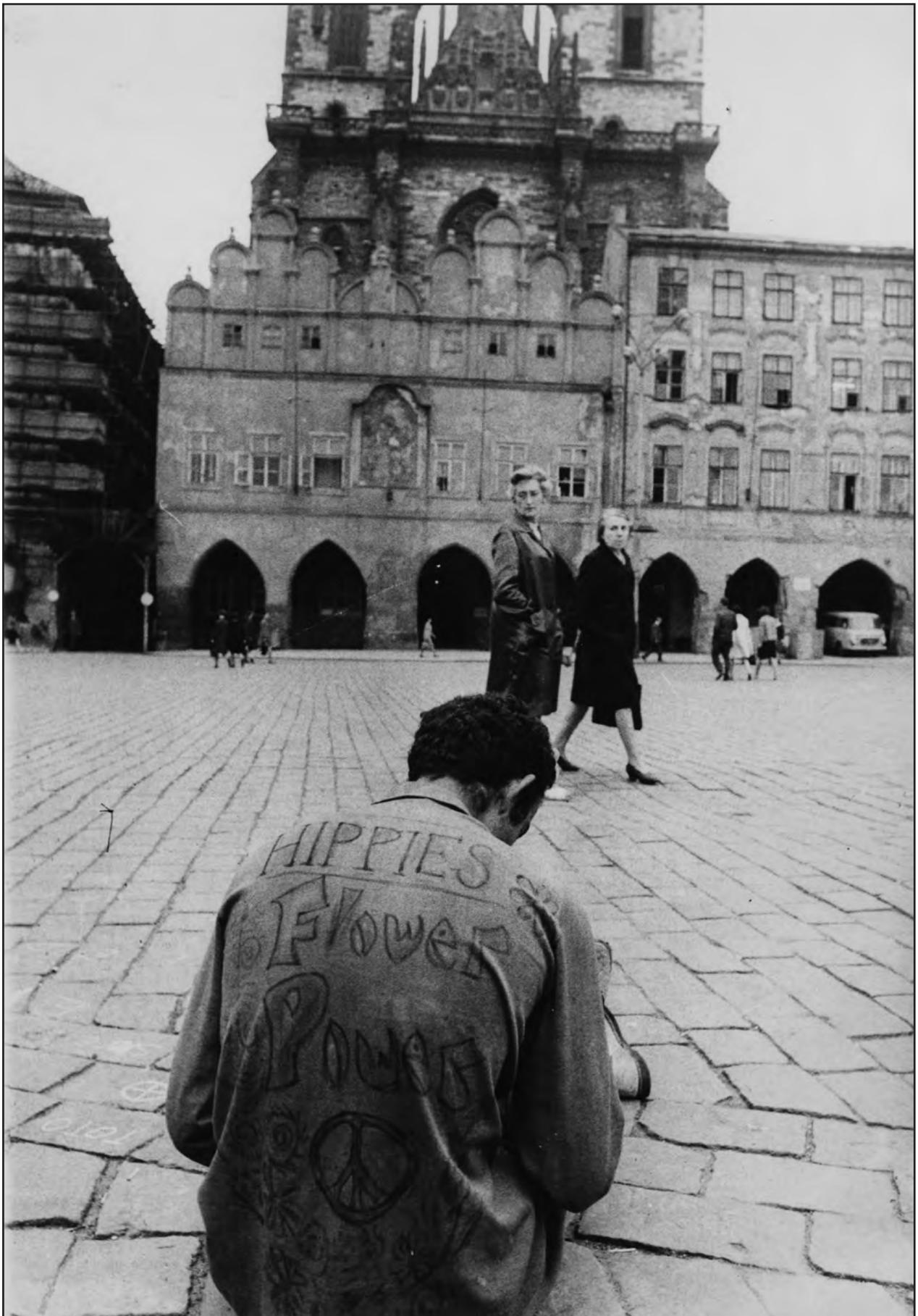


Activity 3 - Czechoslovakia - 5001 - This young Czech girl lets her feelings be known as she shouts "Vn GO Home!" to soldiers sitting on tanks in the streets of Prague. August 26, 1968. Prague, Czechoslovakia. (Bettmann/Corbis/AP Images)

Activity 3 Czechoslovakia 5028

Banner-carrying
chanting
Czechoslovaks
demonstrate in
Wenceslas Square
following nation-
wide radio address by
Czech Communist
Party First Secretary
Alexander Dubcek
August 27. Czech
citizens called on
nation's leaders
to tell "the brutal
truth" of the price
exactd by Russia in
exchange for keeping
the Dubcek regime
in power. August
28, 1968. Prague,
Czechoslovakia.
(Betmann/Corbis/AP
Images)





Activity 3 - Czechoslovakia - 5030 - A hippie, formerly a western movement, has established himself in Prague, Czechoslovakia. May 1968. Prague, Czechoslovakia. (AP Photo)



Activity 3 - Czechoslovakia - 5067 - Thousands of protesters are seen sitting at Wenceslas square in downtown Prague, Czechoslovakia, August 24, 1968, demonstrating against the Russian invasion, surrounding the statue of King Wenceslas. Some fighting is reported in the capital after the Soviet Union and four Warsaw Pact allies invaded the country. August 24, 1968. Prague, Czechoslovakia. (AP Photo)



Activity 3 - Mexico - 5011 - Anti-communist student organization with signs picketed in front of the offices of the United Nations in Mexico City. The students protested for the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. August 22, 1968. Mexico City, Mexico. (Jesus Diaz/AP Photo)

Translation Note: Clockwise from upper-left, signs read: "Russia: Mexico Repudiates You," "Go Czechoslovakia Martyr!", "Russian Killers!", "What kind of freedom do the Czechoslovakian people have?", "Communist Killers!"



Activity 3 - Mexico - 5013 - University students, right, in underwear are held at gunpoint by soldiers inside an apartment building in Tlatelolco, Mexico City. A Mexican magazine published photos, including the one shown, showing that paramilitary forces hired to provide security during the 1968 Olympic games apparently participated in a massacre of student protesters, something past Mexican governments have denied. October 2, 1968. Mexico City, Mexico. (Proceso/AP Photo)



Activity 3 - Mexico - 5051 - A young demonstrator screams in pain as a policeman keeps a firm grip on his finger, while escorting the youth from Central Plaza during an anti-government rally. Units of riot police and soldiers opened fire to break up the demonstration, the latest in a series over the past six weeks. August 28, 1968. Mexico City, Mexico. (Bettmann/Corbis/AP Images)

Activity 3 Mexico

5070

Mexican women were among the young and the old who demonstrated in Mexico City, Sept. 30, 1968. Hundreds of women, supported by their children, marched through the city to protest government treatment of students during previous demonstrations. The V signs signify the women's determination for victory. September 30, 1968. Mexico City, Mexico. (AP Photo)





Activity 3 - Mexico - 5071 - Students carry a large banner of Cuban revolutionary Che Guevara during a demo against the government. 1968. Mexico City, Mexico.
(© Abbas/Magnum Photos)

ACTIVITY 3

First-Hand Accounts and Excerpts

United States

You can read Mark Rudd's letter at the following Columbia University website as a scanned reproduction of the publication "Up Against the Wall," which reprinted Rudd's letter.

<https://exhibitions.cul.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/1968/item/5524>

Note: If the link has changed, or does not work, try using search terms such as "Mark Rudd, Grayson Kirk, Newspaper, Up Against the Wall, Vol III, no. 1, Columbia University, etc."

France

Source 1: Janet Flanner was an American journalist who lived in Paris. Her *Paris Journal* (see "Resources and Further Reading") in two volumes covered 1944-65 and 1965-77. Flanner, who sent many missives back to the U.S. magazine the *New Yorker*, captured the mood of May 1968 in Paris, with observations such as "...with their indomitable anger and energy, the students had started building barricades throughout the Latin Quarter....They dug up the cube-shaped paving blocks...piled them as ammunition and protection...and...added...cars." Flanner described the students as "young Davids," armed only with trash can lids, comparing them to the "...mature, burly C.R.S. men" with "enormous shields of medieval size." Flanner paints a picture of the Latin Quarter after a night of fighting as like "...a historic battleground, visited by tourists with cameras."

Source 2: If you search the Internet, you will find many websites dedicated to the student protests of 1968 in France. There are great sites showing images of the many posters art students designed, printed, and placed prominently around Paris. There are also many testimonials and books on the subject. Historian Ronald Fraser and a group of colleagues compiled an oral history based on interviews with people who participated in protest movements in various countries, including France, in 1968. Quotes from Fraser's book, *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt*, will get students in the mindset of young Parisians. For instance, Fraser quotes René Bourrigaud, a student at the École Supérieure d'Agriculture, Angers, whose reflections highlight students' newfound sense of participation and collaboration, which was in direct contrast to the non-collaborative educational experience in France at the time. She said: "My most vivid memory of May '68? The new-found ability for everyone to speak—to speak of anything with anyone. In that month of talking during May you learnt more than in the whole of your five years of studying."

Emotions were running high among youth, who felt strongly that the educational system and society itself needed to change. When the movement took shape, dissatisfied students, including Nelly Finkielsztejn, student at Nanterre University outside of Paris, were exhilarated and bold. *“The unthinkable happened! The strikes were like a flame,”* Finkielsztejn said, *“...like everything we’d been saying at Nanterre...Fuck this immutable society that refuses to consider the misery, poverty, inequality and injustice it creates, that divides people according to their origins and skills!”*

Henri Weber, who was at the Sorbonne in 1968, demonstrates how events were formative for the youth activists: *“It’s a moment I shall never forget. People were building up the cobblestones into barricades because they wanted—many of them for the first time—to throw themselves into a collective, spontaneous activity. People were releasing all their repressed feelings, expressing them in a festive spirit. Thousands felt the need to communicate with each other, to love one another. That night has forever made me optimistic about history. Having lived through it, I can’t ever say, ‘It will never happen...”*

Czechoslovakia

Excerpts from *The Czech Black Book: An eyewitness, documented account of the invasion of Czechoslovakia*. (See “Resources and Further Reading.”)

These excerpts include two leaflets found during the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and a street scene as printed in a local newspaper.

Excerpt 1. p. 50: From a leaflet seen Wednesday August 21, 1968

“Charles University, loyal to the traditions of humanism, science, progress, and the truth, protests categorically against the action of the five friendly governments of the Warsaw Pact, which violated the principles governing the relations between socialist countries, as well as the fundamental norms of international law.

“Science and humanity can flourish only when freedom, independence, state sovereignty, and peace reign. Charles University supports with all its strength the representatives of our state power and of the Communist party who in the post-January period began creating the conditions for the peaceful and successful development of our socialist state. Therefore, it demands the immediate withdrawal of occupation forces from the territory of our state.”

Excerpt 2. p. 51: From a leaflet seen Wednesday August 21, 1968, originally in German, from the University in Prague

“We, the former students who on November 17, 1939, were dragged off to Nazi concentration camps, solemnly declare that we firmly and loyally support our President, Army General Ludvik Svoboda, the Chairman of the National Assembly, Josef Smrkovsky, the legal Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic headed by Oldrich Cernik, and the Action Program of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and of its Central Committee headed by First Secretary Alexander Dubcek.

“We therefore ask the people of the whole world for support, and we turn particularly to former inmates of Nazi concentration camps and to students of the world with the following appeal: Prevent the second occupation of Czechoslovakia!”

Mexico

Listen or read the radio broadcast or transcript of “Mexico’s 1968 Massacre: What Really Happened?”

Note: If the link provided does not work, or has changed, try searching on terms such as “radio diaries, or “1968 radio diaries”

<http://www.radiodiaries.org/mexico-68-a-movement-a-massacre-and-the-40-year-search-for-the-truth>

Radio Transcript

Produced by Joe Richman and Anayansi Diaz-Cortes of Radio Diaries

<http://www.radiodiaries.org/mexico-68-a-movement-a-massacre-and-the-40-year-search-for-the-truth>

Mexico '68: A Movement, a Massacre, and the 40-Year Search for the Truth

NPR HOST: Eight years ago today, a new president was inaugurated in Mexico who promised to usher in a new era of democracy and openness. Vicente Fox’s Election in 2000 ended 70 years of one-party rule by the PRI. It also cracked open the door to a dark corner of Mexico’s past: the massacre of university students in Mexico City in 1968.

A student movement ignited in the summer of that year, challenging the authoritarian government. But the movement was short lived, lasting less than three months. The reasons why remained buried until recently.

Today, producers Joe Richman and Anayansi Diaz-Cortes of Radio Diaries bring us an audio history of Mexico 1968 and a 40-year search for the truth.

(MONTAGE OF IDS)

My name is Marcellino Perelló Vals. I was a leader of the '68 student movement in Mexico.

Well, my name is Marta Acevedo, and I was twenty-eight years old in 1968.

My name is Miguel Breseda. I was seventeen.

My name is...Sergio Aguayo...Jorge Castañeda...Marcela Fernandez Violante...
Mario Nuñez Mariel...

My name is David Huerta, and I was just one among many other students in the student movement

Marcellino Perelló: To understand Mexico, we are obliged to understand what occurred in '68.

(MUSIC FADES)

ARCHIVAL: Mexico City, the capital of the Republic of Mexico is a modern, bustling metropolis with a population of nearly six million...

JORGE CASTAÑEDA, HISTORIAN: In 1968, economically speaking, these were very good times for Mexico. Jobs were being created, opportunities were being generated. Mainly in the city, but just about everywhere in the country. So, this was a time of peace and prosperity. Things were going very well.

ARCHIVAL (SPANISH): Enclavado en la bella zona residencial al sur de la ciudad, muy cerca de la glorieta Rivera....

ELISA RAMIREZ, STUDENT: We were so civilized, so Americanized. And we had the Olympic Games.

NEWS REPORT: This is downtown Mexico City. The streets are jammed with traffic, sidewalks packed with people. For the government, the Olympics are the opportunity to show the world that Mexico is no longer a small and backward nation.

JORGE CASTAÑEDA: The first time, a sporting event like the Olympics is held in an underdeveloped or developing country. This was the debutante ball. This was Mexico's entry onto the world scene.

ALEJANDRO ALVAREZ BEJAR, STUDENT: The government was talking of the Mexican miracle. Even though in the reality of those days, things were not as happy as they appeared.

ARCHIVAL: Mexico's President Díaz-Ordaz is one of Mexico's most successful leaders.

DAVID HUERTA, STUDENT: Gustavo Díaz Ordaz was president of Mexico from 1964 to 1970. He was very authoritarian

PRESIDENT GUSTAVO DIAZ ORDAZ , ARCHIVAL: Señores miembros del Senado...

SERGIO AGUAYO, HISTORIAN: In the Sixties, we were still a country where the government controlled everything. Presidents were the equivalent of monarchs. I mean, it was forbidden to demonstrate in the center of Mexico City, in the heartland of the country. You could not go and express you dissent.

JORGE CASTAÑEDA: This was a president who wanted at all cost to keep control out of principle. He believed that he had to protect the country's stability against everybody and, in particular, against longhaired, bearded, mini-skirted, bell-bottomed-trouserred students who represented everything that he was against.

(MUSIC)

DAVID HUERTA: We were urban middle class; low middle class bunch of young people. Many of us were wearing very long hair and listening to loud music like rock and roll.

SERGIO AGUAYO: It was, in a symbolic way, the clash of a new Mexico and an old Mexico.

(MUSIC FADES)

ANTONIO AZUELA, STUDENT: You have a middle class with eyes closed and a group of students saying, "This was not a democracy. And this is not working."

(MUSIC: INSTRUMENTAL)

MARCELA FERNANDEZ DE VIOLANTE, STUDENT: And so we were together, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds. We had these big, big meetings

at the campus... crowded, crowded. And people singing, “Que Vivan los Estudiantes...ta-ri-ra-ra-ra-ra.”

(MUSIC: “QUE VIVAN LOS ESTUDIANTES”)

MARCELA FERNANDEZ DE VIOLANTE: We were very young, very naive. But for the first time, you had this notion that this country was going to be changed by the power of our convictions.

MIGUEL BRESEDA, STUDENT: You would get in a bus and give a speech and inform the people because newspaper wouldn't publish anything. And people would give you money; they would congratulate you and they would say, “We are with you young people...”

DAVID HUERTA: There was this sense of excitement and adventure. And the problem was growing steadily day after day. It sort of entered into the fabric of Mexico City. What we were seeing was a waking society.

(CHANTING)

MARTA ACEVEDO, STUDENT: Then, the 27th of August came. And I think it was the highest moment of the movement.

(CHANTING: ¡VIVA EL MOVIMIENTO ESTUANDITIL!)

SERGIO AGUAYO, HISTORIAN: Never before in the history of Mexico, half a million people went out to the street to protest, to challenge the authority of the president. And numbers in history and politics matter. I mean, if ten people protest, well that's dissent. When half a million people protest, then that's the beginning of social revolution.

(CHANTING)

MARCELINO PERELLO, STUDENT LEADER: We were asking for the president to go out and to speak to us. En donde está, POM POM, el ocicón, POM POM. Que no lo vemos, POM POM, en el balcón, POM POM.

(MUSIC & CHANTING)

MIGUEL BRESEDA: The Zócalo, the main square, was lit with burning tires. There was dancing, guitars. A little bottle of tequila there and over there.

MARCELINO PERELLO: It was unforgettable. We were dreamers. And we were very happy.

(MUSIC FADES)

MIGUEL BRESEDA: So we are there. And the doors of the Palace open and the soldiers come out and they stand in front of us and say, “Señores se les ha permitido hacer su manifestación y se les solicita que abandonen la plaza. You have been allowed to make your demonstration, now you have to leave.” And I remember the whistles and yelling and all of that. And, “We are not leaving!” Holding arms all of us and saying, “We’re not moving.” And they take out their bayonets, and put them in their rifles and they start walking towards us.

MARIO NUÑEZ MARIEL, STUDENT: And you can hear when the army walks with the bayonets, it’s a noise you will never forget

(MAKES SOUNDS OF STEPS).

DAVID HUERTA: I remember that some of the students decided that we had weapons in our pockets. Big twenty-cent coins that were made of copper. Very huge coins, and heavy. Some of the students threw those coins against the soldiers. And you know what happened? The soldiers stopped to pick up those coins. It was not really that much money, twenty-cents. But for them, it was. I mean, the soldiers, our enemies, were the same age as us. If you take the uniform out of a soldier, what you discover behind is a poor, young peasant. In a way, weren’t we fighting for them? Sort of an eye-opener.

NEWS REPORT: Good evening. In Mexico City today, the agitation among the students against what they choose to call, government repression, is far from over.

(FADES)

MARTA ACEVEDO: We felt that there should be a dialogue and that the president had to come to terms with the things that were happening.

DAVID HUERTA: We didn’t want to overthrow the government. We want some changes. It was really reasonable. It was nothing to be afraid of. After this huge demonstration, we felt sure that they could not say no to our demands. And the answer, on the part of the government was issued on the presidential speech on September the first.

PRESIDENT GUSTAVO DIAZ ORDAZ, ARCHIVAL: Hemos sido tolerantes hasta excesos criticables, pero todo tiene un límite.

TRANSLATOR: We have been tolerant, but everything has a limit and we can no longer allow the laws to be broken as they have been in the eyes of the world.

DAVID HUERTA, STUDENT: After that, in September, things became really messy.

NEWS REPORT: Mexico City resembles an armed camp tonight, with thousands of troops and police on guard against rebellious students.

DAVID HUERTA: It was like the occupation of a country, of a student's country.

NEWS REPORT: You hear the tear gas. Thousands of students scattering now as the police fire tear gas at them.

JORGE CASTAÑEDA: It's no big deal to have tear gas shot at you, once it's happened. But the first time, it's terrible. You see these guys, you know, shooting these things at you. And then they explode and you can't breathe and you cough and you start crying. It's terrible. Second time it's not so terrible anymore.

MARCELINO PERELLO: The confrontation with the police and with the army scared us, of course. But it was a kind of game.

NEWS REPORT: And it's all over. In about a minute. That whole crowd of nearly two thousand students and other people, dispersed. This is Kenneth Gale in Mexico City.

ELISA RAMIREZ: By that time, they had the jails so filled up with everybody. I mean there were dozens of people a day in jail.

DAVID HUERTA: The confrontation in the streets was getting worse and worse. Of course, there was a deadline. In ten more days, the Olympic Games were about to begin.

SERGIO AGUAYO: And the tragedy was in the making because the students didn't retreat and the government was not going to surrender, an inch.

DAVID HUERTA: We didn't know exactly what the state was capable of. And then, on October 2nd, it became awfully clear.

NEWS REPORT: Students in Mexico City began a new protest march this afternoon. They are demanding the immediate release of other students jailed after rioting earlier this year.

DAVID HUERTA: On the morning of October 2nd, 1968, there was this gathering in the afternoon at Tlatelolco Square. Between four thousand and five thousand people. Nothing like the crowds in August.

MIGUEL BRESEDA: The movement was dwindling a little bit. And people were starting to talk about “let’s go back to school.” It had been too long already. You know, a long, long movement.

GUILLERMO PALACIOS, STUDENT: I was in the middle of the plaza. And suddenly we hear somebody say, “The army is coming in.” And we look back and there was all these infantry troops.

DAVID HUERTA: They started to advance towards the crowd, and at some point we heard some shots. We didn’t know where they came from. And seconds later—how do you say in English?—all hell broke loose.

(ARCHIVAL: SHOTS)

DAVID HUERTA: Somebody said, “These are not real bullets. These are only blanks, don’t be scared don’t be scared.” But they were not blanks.

NEWS REPORT: The troops have moved in. It started off as a peaceful demonstration. The army was circling this plaza called The Plaza of the Three Cultures. They were holding a peaceful rally but now the troops have come in. You can hear what it sounds like.

(ARCHIVAL: SHOTS)

The army is here and they’re firing. They’re letting go with just about everything they have. The other troops have swept across the plaza.

DAVID HUERTA: I have never heard anything like that in my life.

GUILLERMO PALACIOS: The shooting was so strong that we had to stop and just lay down on the floor.

DAVID HUERTA: I saw at least two or three people fall, and blood.

NEWS REPORT: Here they come now. Here comes the tank. It's an armored assault carrier coming right toward us. It's moving into position, aiming its guns toward the plaza right now.

(ARCHIVAL: SOUNDS OF TANK)

MARGARITA SUZAN, STUDENT: I couldn't believe what was happening.

ROLANDO CORDERA, STUDENT: Shooting after shooting. And then, suddenly, the shooting stopped.

MARGARITA SUZAN: I stepped over blood, and then I start to run.

NEWS REPORT: It's night now in Mexico City. And these are the sounds of night in Mexico. Bert Quint, CBS News, Mexico City.

ALEJANDRO ALVAREZ BEJAR: People was really scared, terrified. And nobody wanted to speak about that. So, if you had someone who died there, just keep it silent and don't say anything.

ELISA RAMIREZ: I never went back to the university. I never went back to that group. I completely cut from everything, from then on.

PRESIDENT GUSTAVO DIAZ ORDAZ, ARCHIVAL (OLYMPICS INAUGURATION): De mil novecientos sesenta y ocho, declaro inaugurados los Juegos Olímpicos de México.

(CHEERING)

NEWS REPORT: The Mexican president officially declares open the Games of 1968.

DAVID HUERTA: The thing was, the population in Mexico, they wanted to look the other way. And in a sense that was what happened to Mexican society.

DAVID HUERTA: It was like trying to erase history. For many, many years—thirty, forty years—we didn't know exactly what had happened, what they did to us. There was a movement, there was a massacre, and there was a forty-year search for truth. And after some years, well, the truth started to appear.

NEWS REPORT: July 3, 2000. This morning's Mexican newspaper headlines proclaimed simply, "Fox wins!" A day many Mexicans thought they would never see. The ruling party, the PRI, toppled from power.

(CHANTING: ;QUE VIVA VICENTE, EL NUEVO PRESIDENTE!)

NEWS REPORT: Mexicans have high expectations for their new president, and now his biggest challenge is how not to let them down.

DENISE DRESSER, RESEARCHER: Well, when Vicente Fox was elected president of Mexico in the year 2000. One of his campaign promises had to do with a real in-depth investigation of crimes of the past.

My name is Denise Dresser, and I was a member of the committee that helped to investigate what had happened during the student massacre of 1968. And that's when we discovered, you know, kilometers and kilometers of files.

(SOUNDS OF FILES)

KATE DOYLE, RESEARCHER: My name is Kate Doyle, and I am a senior analyst at the National Security Archive in Washington. And I have been researching the events on October 2nd 1968 in Mexico City for more than a decade.

Here are dozens of file cabinets with declassified intelligence reports, Mexican documents, CIA cables. We know a lot, but there is so much that we still don't know. But let's pull out...

(SOUNDS OF FILES)

One of the key chronicles of what happened is footage that was apparently shot by the military and retained secretly for many years of the day of the massacre, and how it unfolded.

(SOUND OF FILM FOOTAGE)

And so, we're looking at thousands of students gathered. The tanks pulling up and around the plaza. This is one of the apartment buildings overlooking the plaza. And woop, you just saw a flash there, a flash of the gunfire, there it was again. This film helps show the flash of the gun from the apartment window and the soldiers reacting. Those early shots are what set off the massacre.

(SOUND OF FILM FOOTAGE)

SERGIO AGUAYO: The official truth was: There was a skirmish between students and the police. The students fired, the police and the army responded, and a few people were killed. Period. That was the official history.

(SOUND OF FILM FOOTAGE FADES)

JORGE CASTAÑEDA: Now, what happened? We know that when the shooting begins, the first fellow who was shot was General Hernández Toledo, who was leading the army troops that entered the square. He was the first guy to quote unquote fall. So we know that the first shots were not fired by the army against the students, but by somebody against the leader of the army troops. That we know. And we know that the bullet trajectory was an up to down trajectory.

KATE DOYLE: There were security and intelligence agents, dressed in civilian clothing posted in those buildings, each wearing a white glove on his left hand.

JORGE CASTAÑEDA: They were officers from a different part of the army. They were identified by wearing a white glove on their left hand. And that's how they knew who they were.

They were instructed to shoot down at the troops that were posted around the square. Why? To have the troops think that there were student snipers shooting at the troops, and so the troops shot back at the students.

SERGIO AGUAYO: That was the logic. I mean they were going to simulate an attack on the part of the students and therefore the government would have the perfect excuse to crackdown and from that moment onward, everything would be normal.

KATE DOYLE: We still have no idea how many people died that day and who they were. In the hours after the shootout, once the bodies had been removed, groups of cleaning people were sent into the square with brooms and buckets of water, literally, to sweep the evidence away. The blood was very quickly washed off of the plaza floor.

And so you had these wildly varying accounts that anywhere from two hundred to two thousand people had died at Tlatelolco. And that gives you a sense of the dimensions of this mystery.

DENISE DRESSER: Forty years after 1968, there has never been a truth commission; the perpetrators have never really been called into account; former presidents have refused to speak. So there's been this non-spoken pact to leave things as they were.

There will come a point in which people like me will move on to other things, and people who lost family members that day will die, and perhaps we will never know the truth.

SERGIO AGUAYO: And that's why we are still fighting the same battles of 1968. It is one of those rare moments that went beyond a group of students challenging a paranoid president. What was being fought was something more fundamental: the power to control the truth.

(MUSIC: MERCEDES SOSA, "QUE VIVAN LOS ESTUDIANTES")

Produced by Joe Richman and Anayansi Diaz-Cortes of Radio Diaries

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For more information: www.radiodiaries.org

ACTIVITY 5

Timeline of World Events in 1968

Introduction

This timeline is meant to be a companion to the Protest and Politics collection, supplementing the introductory and background information provided in the collection. Activity 5: Create a Classroom Timeline or Visual Thinking Wall About 1968, involves creating a timeline of events in 1968 as a classroom project, with students contributing entries related to the places and events studied in all of the activities in the collection. The information provided here can be useful for teachers wanting to populate the class timeline with additional events and context from this pivotal year.

Please note that there were numerous significant political, social, and cultural events happening around the world in 1968. This timeline includes only a small selection of them. This timeline is not comprehensive and excludes events from many parts of the world.

There are other timelines available online, some of which have been listed in “Reference Materials and Further Reading.”

If you would like to create a digital timeline for—or with—students, you can search online for tools and templates to use. For example, you could search “free technology for teachers” or “creating digital timelines.” The National Archives (www.docsteach.org) is one good source.

January

- Dr. Benjamin Spock and other prominent figures indicted on charges of conspiracy to encourage acts of violating the selective service’s draft.
- Alexander Dubček becomes the Czechoslovakian Communist Party Leader and announces he will pursue reforms for his country.
- 10,000th U.S. airplane lost over Vietnam since start of the war.
- Newsstand selling Western papers opens in Prague city center, an unprecedented access for people living in a Soviet Bloc country.
- North Vietnamese launch Tet Offensive and invade U.S. embassy in Saigon.

February

- Photographer Eddie Adams takes now-iconic image of South Vietnamese official executing Viet Cong prisoner, and it is published in *The New York Times* and widely seen.
- University students in Boston stage four-day hunger strike to protest the Vietnam War.
- More than 10,000 march through Paris, protesting the Vietnam War; later in the month, thousands in Berlin protest the war.
- Thousands of Czechoslovakians celebrate in the streets after the Czechoslovakian hockey team defeated the Soviets in the Olympic Games in Grenoble.
- The Japanese student organization Zengakuren, and other Japanese citizens, stage massive protests of the docking of the USS Enterprise, a nuclear armed vessel, in Sasebo harbor. Police use violence against protestors.
- Broadcast of Walter Cronkite's February 27 CBS News report about his Vietnam trip, in which he says, "For it seems now more certain than ever that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate."
- Czechoslovakian journalists and writers call for the press censorship law of 1966 to be repealed.
- Activist César Chavez fasts for 21 days to promote non-violence in the struggle for farmworker rights and social justice. Chavez meets with Robert Kennedy at end of fast.
- Gallup Poll shows that 50% of Americans disapprove of President Johnson's handling of the war in Vietnam.

March

- New York University students protest Dow Chemical recruitment at the university. (Dow was manufacturer of napalm, a toxic chemical used in Vietnam.)
- A student movement in Mexico City protests the Vietnam War.
- Polish students protest for freedoms and are beaten by government-backed "workers militia."
- Thousand march in Warsaw to protest the brutal repression of previous march.
- Senator Robert Kennedy announces intention to run for Democratic nomination, entering the field with President Lyndon Johnson and challenger Eugene McCarthy.

- Warsaw Pact leaders meet in Moscow to discuss the resignation of Czechoslovakian President Antonin Novotny.
- Student protestors at Nanterre University, outside of Paris, occupy a faculty space and create “The Movement of March 22.”
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., leads a march in Memphis. One black youth is killed.
- Polish students march and demand an end to censorship, free trade unions, and a youth movement not affiliated with the Communist Party. Soon officials would shut down multiple university departments and make multiple arrests.
- President Johnson addresses the nation, describing a proposed step to limit the war and delivering the news that he will not seek reelection.
- U.S. magazines *Harper's* and *Atlantic Monthly* publish special issues on Vietnam.

April

- Assassination of Dr. King in Memphis, Tennessee, on the 4th. Riots ensue in U.S. cities.
- Czechoslovakian Communist Party puts for a plan for 10-year program of political reform, which would include elections in which parties other than itself could stand candidates. Dubček’s plan was to create “a unique experiment in democratic communism,” and “socialism with a human face.” The press becomes more outspoken.
- In Oakland, California, a gunfire exchange between police and members of the Black Panther group results in the death a 17-year-old Black Panther Party member.
- President Johnson signs Civil Rights Act of 1968, which prohibits discriminating on the basis of race in matters of housing.
- The U.S. Secretary of Defense calls up military reserves.
- Protesting the university’s involvement in the Institute for Defense Analysis and proposed gym site in Harlem, students occupy five buildings at Columbia University and take three school officials hostage.
- New York City police storm occupied buildings at Columbia and violently remove student protestors.

May

- May Day celebrations in Czechoslovakia express support for Dubček's political reforms.
- Education authorities in France decide to discipline Nanterre student Dany Cohn-Bendit. Angered by this, students seize university loudspeaker equipment to protest. Pierre Grappin, dean of Nanterre, asks the Ministry of Education to close the university. Demonstrators move into Paris and the Sorbonne. Police enter. They close the Sorbonne for the first time in its 700-year history.
- Czechoslovak leaders visit Moscow. Reforms are criticized by Soviets.
- Thousands of students protest the closure of Nanterre and the Sorbonne, marching through the Latin Quarter (with support from student and faculty unions). Strikes occur at multiple universities in France. Strikes continue, and the Sorbonne remains closed.
- Student protests in the Latin Quarter in Paris turns into the violent "night of the barricades," a battle with heavily armed riot police (May 10 and 11).
- Workers in France sympathize with student protestors and cause a general strike. In Paris, demonstrators number about a million. Students occupy the Sorbonne.
- French leader Charles de Gaulle leaves the country for Romania.
- Protestors occupy the Odéon Theater in Paris. Strikes continue.
- De Gaulle returns to France.
- By the third week of the month, nine million workers are now on strike in France. For the rest of May and June, France is paralyzed by a strike of all major sectors of work, from manufacturing to media, to garbage collection.

June

- Just after midnight on the day after the California primary election, after addressing political supporters, Robert Kennedy is assassinated by Sirhan Sirhan (June 5).
- Czech writer Ludvik Vaculik releases the manifesto "Two Thousand Words," which criticizes Communist rule and Soviet influence in Czechoslovakia and proposes reforms more radical than those in Dubček's Action Program.

- Responding to violence during UC–Berkeley student protests staged in support of French student and worker protests in, Mayor Wallace Johnson enacts a state of emergency and three-day curfew in the city of Berkeley.
- Students at UC–Berkeley protest in support of French student protestors and to demand ethnic studies.

July

- Warsaw Pact members—without representatives from Czechoslovakia—meet in Poland and send a diplomatic message to the Czechs that the country’s actions are jeopardizing the interests of the other socialist countries.
- A fight between rival high schools breaks out in Mexico City and spreads to the commercial center Plaza de la Cuidadela. The next day, two local gangs attack the students with police and military anti-riot units watching; the police eventually beat students and make many arrests.
- UNAM (Autonomous University of Mexico) holds a meeting with two visiting French students from Nanterre, adding to government concerns about student activists and leftists plans.
- Mexican students stage a demonstration to demand the release of students arrested three days before. This coincides with the annual Fidel Castro support march. Riots break out, with students suspecting government “plants” causing initial violence.
- Leadership of the Soviet and Czechoslovakian Communist Parties meet in Czechoslovakia. Dubček defends his reforms. Soviets threaten invasion.
- East Germany, Poland, Hungary, and the Soviet Union announce military exercises on the Czech border.

August

- U.S. troop totals in Vietnam peak at 541,000.
- Mexican student groups form a cooperative “National Strike Council” (CNH). They create “brigades” to educate the public in the absence of trustworthy press coverage of events. In a nod to the Prague Spring, one brigade is called the “Brigade Alexander Dubček.”
- Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev receives a letter from members of the Czech Communist party, requesting military intervention. (This letter is later proved fraudulent.)
- In Miami, Republicans nominate Richard Nixon as the Republican candidate for U.S. president.

- Overnight, about 500,000 Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops cross the Czechoslovakian border in the invasion known as “Operation Danube.”
- At about 1 a.m. on the 21st, Czech state radio announces the invasion, calling on citizens to keep the peace, and ordering Czech military to not resist advancing armies. At about 3 a.m., Soviet troops arrest Dubček and other Czech leaders. The invaders distribute propaganda claiming they came to Czechoslovakia to save the people, and Tass, the Soviet news service, reports that Czech government officials had requested help. At about 8 a.m., invading troops and crowd confront each other in two main squares of Prague. Tanks fire at Czech buildings.
- Having been taken to Moscow, Dubček and the others are strong-armed into renouncing reform and sign the “Moscow Protocol” agreeing to the presence of Soviet Bloc army troops in Czechoslovakia.
- Chicago Mayor Charles Daley opens the Democratic Convention in Chicago. There are widespread demonstrations.
- In actions widely believed to be unprovoked, Chicago police beat protestors, sending many to the hospital. This is captured on film.
- Censorship is reintroduced to Czechoslovakia.
- French president Charles de Gaulle orders the cobblestones of the Latin Quarter in Paris paved over.
- Mexico’s CNH is able to stage massive protests, with hundreds of thousands of demonstrators, against police violence.

September

- Feminists protest the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City, New Jersey.
- French student Claude Leveque from L’Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris comes to Mexico City and teaches student groups how to print political posters.
- Protests continue in Mexico City.
- The Mexican army surrounds UNAM campus and seizes students and faculty, holding them at gunpoint while the school is searched.
- Mexican police invade the Polytechnic University in Mexico City. Students fight back until the army arrives and fires.

October

- Student activists and others rally in Mexico City's Tlatelolco Square to announce plans for a hunger strike in support of political prisoners. Military troops and police massacre hundreds.
- Olympic Games open in Mexico City on the 12th. Thirty-two African nations boycott to protest the inclusion of South Africa.
- U.S. athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos perform a black power salute during the playing of the Star-Spangled Banner at the medal ceremony, protesting the treatment of African Americans.
- President Johnson announces a halt to bombing in North Vietnam.

November

- Nixon wins the popular vote with 43.4 percent over Democrat Hubert Humphrey's 42.7 percent in the presidential election. This was the thinnest margin in a presidential election to date.
- San Francisco State University students strike, demanding changes to curriculum offerings. Students shut down the school for six months, and the SFSU creates the first ethnic studies department at a U.S. university.
- The South Vietnamese government agrees to join the Paris peace talks, which had begun in May.

December

- Launch of NASA's Apollo 8 mission, which orbited the moon. As their spacecraft orbited the moon on December 24, Commander Frank Borman and crew members William A. Anders and James A. Lovell worked together to create "Earthrise," the first color photograph of Earth taken by humans in lunar orbit.



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