

## **Module 05: 1968 — A Generation in Revolt?**

### **Introduction**

In the popular memory of the last half-century, several years stand out as historical turning points, although none more so than 1968, the "year of the barricades." The year opened with the bloody Tet offensive in Vietnam beaming out of televisions all over the world and ended with Apollo 8 orbiting the moon. Yet internal rebellion would become the hallmark of 1968. In countries on both sides of the Cold War divide, internal dissent challenged traditional authority. In May, a student rebellion against the French government and capitalism grew into the largest general strike of the twentieth century. In August, Soviet troops rolled into Prague, quashing a year of internal liberalization and "socialism with a human face," while half a world away in Chicago, peace activists and cultural radicals took part in a week-long protest against the Democratic National Convention and waged running battles with the police and National Guard.

Understanding why the rebellions took place entails a study of both local and national contexts. This module allows you to draw comparisons between the events that took place in Paris, Prague, and Chicago. As you read the material, keep the following question in mind to guide your study: How did the ideas, motivations, and actions of those fighting on both sides of the rebellions of 1968 differ, and in what ways were they similar?