



The cultural revolution of the 1960s

The prosperity started in the 1950s continued in the first years of the following decade. However, the 1960s were a period of enormous change in the western world. In 1963, the American president John F. Kennedy was assassinated, and Lyndon Johnson became President. The United States increased its military intervention in the Vietnam war, while in the United Kingdom the economic growth slowed down. The faith of the American and British people in the Establishment began to decrease. Many young Americans took the street to demonstrate against the Vietnam war. Soon they started rejecting the moral values and lifestyles of their parents and all forms of authority. In the second half of the decade San Francisco became the capital of the hippie movement. Hippies wanted to establish a new model of society: they refused well paid 'regular' jobs and went to live in self-managed communes, they were against war and any form of racism, and their slogan was "Make Love Not War". Their appearance showed their choice for an alternative lifestyle: they had long hair and wore colourful casual clothes such as bell-shaped trousers, large Indian hemp shirts, and cotton headbands. Their ideology was based on mystical religions, the use of drugs, and sexual freedom. The hippie counter-culture spread from San Francisco to almost all American University campuses, and juvenile dissent grew incessantly.

The disillusionment with the traditional American way of life was not represented only by the hippie movement, and during the 1960s the Civil Rights Movement came out. It was a non-violent movement fighting to end all types of discrimination and prejudice. The year 1968 was probably the most tumultuous year of the decade and of recent history. In the United States, the protest against the Vietnam war forced Lyndon Johnson to renounce the White House and Martin Luther King, the black leader of the Civil Rights Movement, was assassinated in Memphis.

All over the world rebellions broke out: in France the students were protagonists of the May protest, while riots erupted in a lot of cities like Chicago, Tokyo, London, and Mexico City. In the Eastern bloc, the Soviet Red Army invaded Czechoslovakia and violently stopped the so-called 'Prague Spring', that is the political liberalisation wanted by the Czech leader Alexander Dubcek.

ACTIVITIES

1 Complete the following sentences.

- 1 The American President who was assassinated in was After him became President.
- 2 In Britain, slowed down in the 1960s.
- 3 In the USA, a lot of young people started to protest against
- 4 The city that was considered the centre of the hippie movement was
- 5 Hippies lived in, didn't have any regular, and was their slogan.
- 6 Their look included hair, trousers, shirts, and headbands.
- 7 They used and believed in love.
- 8 In 1968, Lyndon Johnson the White House after the protests against
- 9 In 1968,, leader of, was assassinated.
- 10 In France students took the street during the
- 11 The invaded after its leader Dubcek tried a political liberalisation during the

2 Choose one of the following topics, get further information about it, and write a short report.

- 1 John F. Kennedy, his wife, and the President's murder.
- 2 Martin Luther King and his famous speech "I had a dream..."