

## **THE WORLD BEFORE AND AFTER 1969**

### **The Early 1960s**

Profound socio-political changes begin to be felt around the world in the early 1960s.

In Quebec, the Quiet Revolution brings rapid modernization to Quebec society. There are a few bumps along the road: the Front de libération du Québec carries out terrorist activities and violent protests are held. The Quebec Women's Federation is founded in 1966.

In the United States, two great currents stir up American society. The African-American Civil Rights Movement follows on the wave of decolonisation in African countries and the unrest in South Africa in the face of apartheid, which leads to the arrest of Nelson Mandela. The movement's leading figures are Stokely Carmichael (Black Power), Bobby Seale (the Black Panthers), Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, who delivers his "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963 and wins the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. The peace movement, born during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, raises people's awareness of the threat of nuclear weapons; in 1962 Linus Pauling receives the Nobel Peace Prize for his campaign against nuclear-weapon testing. Protests against the war in Vietnam are the logical consequence; the first bombings and the arrival of American troops date from 1965, and the first protests are held in Washington that same year. In 1967, 100,000 come out to hear Martin Luther King speak in front of the United Nations headquarters during a

march for peace. In October of that year the Pentagon is encircled by thousands of protesters engaged in a sit-in for peace. “Flower Power” is born out of the protest movement against the war in Vietnam.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the Berlin Wall goes up in 1961. “May 1968,” an unprecedented student and worker uprising, takes place in France: The country is paralysed by a spontaneous general strike. That same year sees the Prague Spring, when Czechoslovakia is taken unaware by its population’s non-violent resistance to Warsaw Pact troops.

The 1960s are a time of major advances in safeguarding human rights. Amnesty International, which works for the release of political prisoners and for the abolition of the death penalty and torture, is founded in 1961. In 1964, US President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act, which prohibits all discrimination based on a person’s race or sex. The Nobel Peace Prize is awarded in 1968 to René Cassin, principal author of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

## 1969

Violent protests take place at the University of California in Berkeley in May. President Richard Nixon announces the withdrawal of 60,000 US soldiers from Vietnam in December. In Canada, the Omnibus Bill, precursor to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, is introduced by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau and adopted on May 14: Reflecting the new values of the Canadian people, it addresses abortion, homosexuality and gun ownership.

On June 28, the Stonewall riots erupt in New York. They will prove to be a turning point in the movement for equality, as homosexuals begin to claim their rights.

On August 4 in Paris, Henry Kissinger and Xuan Thuy, representing the United States and Vietnam respectively, hold secret peace talks, which fail.

In August there are violent clashes between Catholics and Protestants in Belfast and Londonderry; for the first time, the English army opens fire on protesters in Belfast.

On November 13 and 14, a protest in Washington against the Vietnam War attracts 250,000 people.

On December 9, the Rogers Plan for the Middle East is presented by William P. Rogers, the Nixon administration's secretary of state. The plan calls for Israeli withdrawal from

the Sinai Peninsula according to a calendar approved by Israel and Egypt, peaceful relations between the two countries and the creation of several demilitarized border zones.

A technological revolution is under way. The Concorde takes its first flight in France; in the United States the Boeing 747, the largest passenger aircraft, takes its first test flight. On July 21, Apollo XI lands on the moon. A billion people watch as the astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin take their first steps on the moon: "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

## **Post-1969**

In 1971, West German Chancellor Willy Brandt receives the Nobel Peace Prize for his policy of openness to the Eastern Bloc and his rapprochement with the German Democratic Republic (*Ostpolitik*). The two German nations recognize each other's sovereignty and are admitted to the United Nations the following year.

New protests against the Vietnam War. In 1971, 500,000 protesters march through the streets of Washington; more than 7,000 people are arrested.

The war in Vietnam ends in 1973 following negotiations between Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, who are awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The agreement stipulates that US troops will withdraw from the country within sixty days; the Vietnamese government agrees to free American prisoners of war. The final marine returns to the United States on March 29. In Vietnam, battles between North and South continue. On April 30, 1975, the South Vietnamese government capitulates, North and South are reunited, and the capital is renamed Ho Chi Minh City.