BY J. MARK RAMSEYER AND ERIC B. RASMUSEN

Nineteen sixty-eight. The best of times, the worst of times—probably it all depended on what one wanted to do, much as it had for Therese Defarge and Sydney

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Carton two centuries before. At least for those with appropriately libertine preferences, they could be amusing times. *Hair* and *I Am Curious (Yellow)* did make standing in line for on-stage nudity and pornography respectable. LSD and anonymous sex did still promise risk-free entertainment.

But they were grim times too. Already in 1967 the Red Guards had sacked the British compound in Peking. Come 1968, the Vietcong launched the Tet offensive, American troops massacred the town of My Lai, and the Soviets trashed Czechoslovakia. James Earl Ray shot Martin Luther King, and 55,000 troops quieted the riots that followed. Students sacked Columbia and shut down Paris. They took over the Chicago streets. And when young instructors at San Francisco State told their students to bring guns to class, the university president just quit and went home.

Life in Japan moved in parallel to all this. Over the course of 1968, New Left radicals staged protest after protest. They took over the prestigious University of Tokyo. They fought off the police with bricks and molotov cocktails. They assembled an 800,000-strong...