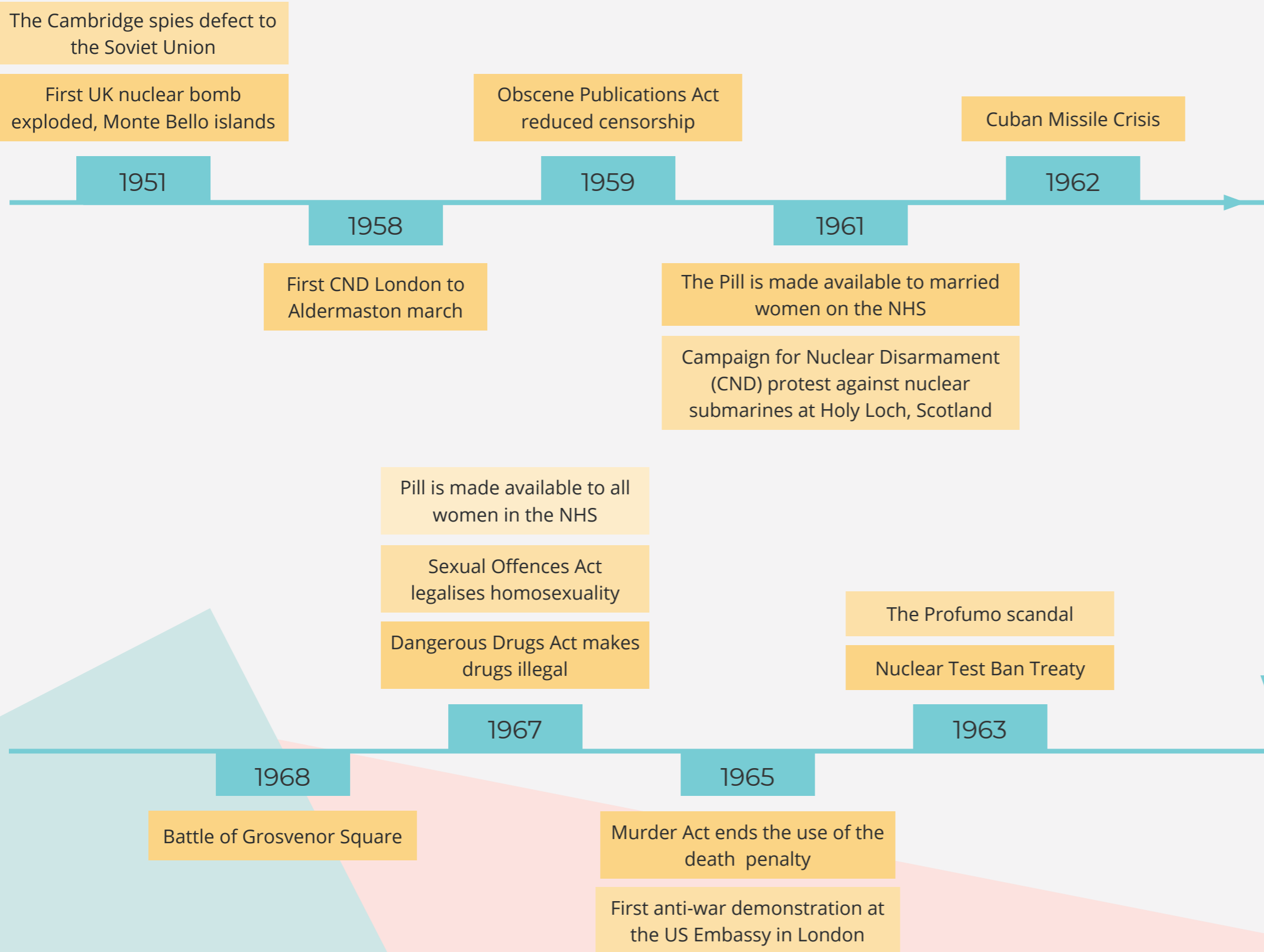


## Key Question 5 : How did attitudes to authority change in the 1950s and 1960s?

### Timeline of events



“There is a need for the State to do less to restrict personal freedom” Labour MP Roy Jenkins in 1959

| Key words                 |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Permissive society</b> | Changes that meant people had more freedom of choice in their lives |
| <b>Contraceptive</b>      | Pills that prevent women from becoming pregnant                     |
| <b>Censorship</b>         | When the government limits access to information                    |
| <b>Civil disobedience</b> | Public protests against decisions made by the government            |
| <b>Rally</b>              | A large open-air meeting  |
| <b>Cabinet</b>            | The ministers who advise the Prime Minister                         |
| <b>Public schools</b>     | Schools that parents paid expensive fees to get their children into |

**Important concept**

The Establishment – the privileged elite of people who ran the country had been to the same public schools like Eton College, the same universities like Oxford and Cambridge. People in the 1950s and 60s began to question why these people were running everything.

## Key Question 5 : How did attitudes to authority change in the 1950s and 1960s?

### Scandals

'The Establishment' were the privileged elite in UK society who shared similar public school backgrounds. They dominated Conservative governments.

- John Profumo, Minister for War in Harold Macmillan's Conservative government.
- Profumo had an affair with nightclub dancer Christine Keeler.
- Keeler also had a relationship with Captain Eugene Ivanov, a Soviet naval diplomat and spy.
- Profumo told Macmillan and Parliament that he had met Keeler and that nothing sexual had happened.
- A note to her cancelling a meeting written on Ministry of Defence note-paper showed Profumo was lying.
- Profumo resigned from the Cabinet and from Parliament.
- The scandal boosted support for Labour leader Harold Wilson.
- Harold Macmillan resigned as Prime Minister.

### Student protests 1968

Opposition to the Vietnam War united CND protesters and younger radicals. Protests focused on the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square in London.

- CND arranged the first protest outside the US Embassy in 1965.
- London School of Economics students formed the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign in 1967, led by Tariq Ali, an excellent public speaker.
- There were several violent anti-war protests outside the American Embassy in Grosvenor Square in March 1968, including the 'Battle of Grosvenor Square'.
- In October 1968 another demonstration was planned and in London but to avoid violence a peaceful rally was held in Hyde Park instead.

Opposition was also expressed towards the UK government who supported the war - Harold Wilson, Labour Prime Minister, was stripped of his honorary presidency of the Cambridge University Labour Club; Denis Healey, the Labour Minister for Defence, almost had his car turned over by Cambridge students. Students expressed their opposition to the war at universities across the UK.

### Permissive society

The 1960s the British people gained a lot more personal freedom – the changes that brought this about were called the "permissive society".

- The contraceptive pill was made available to all women in 1967.
- The 1967 Abortion Act legalised abortion with medical consent.
- The 1969 Divorce Reform Act allowed "no blame" divorces.
- The 1967 Sexual Offences Act allowed private acts of homosexuality were legal between men aged 21 and over so that it could not be used for blackmail.
- The 1965 Murder Act an Act abolished the death penalty. Life imprisonment was used instead. This came after some serious miscarriages of justice e.g. Derek Bentley, Timothy Evans and Ruth Ellis.
- The 1959 Obscene Publications Act said that adult literature which was important for science, literature, art or learning should not be censored.

However:

- The Drugs the Dangerous Drugs Act of 1967 made it illegal to possess drugs like heroin, cocaine and cannabis.
- There were increases in the rates of sexually transmitted infections.

### Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND)

The first UK nuclear bomb was exploded in the Monte Bello islands near Australia in 1951. The USA stationed nuclear bombers in East Anglia, at bases like Swaffham, from 1946 and nuclear submarines in Holy Loch Scotland from 1961.

Peace campaigners began **Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND)** in 1958 to persuade the UK government to give up its nuclear weapons by following a campaign of rallies, marches and civil disobedience. To achieve this they:

- marched at Easter every year from London to Aldermaston (nuclear research)
- held sit-down protests at the nuclear bomber bases in East Anglia
- used small boats to try and stop US submarines getting to Holy Loch.

By 1960 there were 400 CND branches and CND's monthly magazine Sanity had 45,000 regular readers. Support began to drop away after the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis led to the 1963 Test Ban Treaty.