

The International Vietnam Conference (1968)

Abstract

The International Vietnam Conference was organized by the Socialist German Student League (SDS) of West Berlin and took place at the Technical University of Berlin on February 17–18, 1968. Rudi Dutschke, one of the West German student movement's leaders, was among the main participants. A total of about 5,000 people from 14 countries took part. The congress was directed against the U.S.-led Vietnam War and more generally against Western imperialism, of which NATO in particular was seen as an expression. The participants naively showed solidarity with the Vietcong, whose struggle they saw as part of the world socialist revolution. About 15,000 mainly young people took part in the final demonstration on February 18.

Source

Translation of transcript

Speaker: While American bombs are falling on Vietnam, the International Vietnam Congress begins in West Berlin on February 17, 1968. It lasts two days, during which the Socialist German Student League (SDS) sends a message of protest against the U.S. military presence in Vietnam. The gathering gives rise to additional demonstrations and student initiatives, which increasingly assume the form of a revolt. For the '68 generation, solidarity with the Vietnamese people against the supposed aggressor, the United States, prompts a larger search for meaning—a protest against a way of life that, as the philosopher Ernst Bloch notes, is devoid of content, a revolt against the apparatuses of political parties, unions, corporations, and governments whose power mechanisms cannot be influenced and are no longer even transparent. According to (student movement leader) Rudi Dutschke, the student-demonstrators want to oppose bureaucratic rule and replace it with a world without war, hunger, and exploitative labor practices. Thus, their Vietnam protest eventually turns into a far-reaching debate about the modernization of society as a whole.

Source: 17. February 1968 – SDS-Vietnam Congress. History Vision (history-vision.de), Clip-ID: JHT000087D (1968).

history-vision.de

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