

Student Strikes in Frankfurt am Main (1968)

Abstract

After Hessian Minister of Culture Ernst Schütte issued a decree stating that teacher training at universities would be shortened to six semesters, students in the education department at Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt organized a general assembly on December 3, 1968. They registered their protest to the decree by deciding on an open-ended boycott of all lectures and seminars. They were quickly joined by students pursuing teacher-certification credentials in the humanities and political science departments. Students in the sociology department also came together in a general assembly and decided on an open-ended—though “active”—strike. Led by Daniel Cohn-Bendit, the department’s students were known for being particularly political, and they linked their strike to a demand for the comprehensive reorganization of the sociology curriculum. On December 8, 1968, students occupied the sociology department and renamed it the “Spartacus Institute.” The occupation ended on December 17, 1968, after Theodor Adorno, Jürgen Habermas, Ludwig von Friedeburg, and Alexander Mitscherlich issued a written request for students to leave the building. Their forcible eviction by police was thus prevented. These two photographs, which were taken during the strikes, show student participants in a general assembly in lecture hall VI of Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt. The graffiti on the rear wall reads: “Kampf der Klassenjustiz” [“Fight class-based justice”] and “Die Freisler sind noch unter uns” [“The Freislers are still among us”], a reference to the infamous Nazi judge Roland Freisler which made reference to the fact that many former high-ranking Nazis still held leading positions in many areas of West German professional life, including the universities.

Source





Source: Photo 1: General assembly of sociologists in Lecture Hall VI during the student strike at Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, December 1968. Photo 2: Slogans on the wall: “Kampf der Klassenjustiz” [“Fight class-based justice”] and “Die Freisler sind noch unter uns” [“The Freislers are still among us”], December 1968. Photos by Abisag Tüllmann.

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