Yugoslav Student League protests Vietnam War, 1966-1968

Autumn 1966 to April 1968

Country: Serbia
Country: Bosnia and Herzegovina
Country: Croatia
Location City/State/Province: Zagreb, Belgrade, and Sarajevo
Location Description: This campaign took place in The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia before it split into separate nation-states

Goals:
1. To raise anti-Vietnam war sentiment in Yugoslavia in solidarity with US protesters.
2. To persuade Yugoslavian leaders to not cooperate with the US government in order to authentically condemn the Vietnam war.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 010. Newspapers and journals
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 048. Protest meetings

Methods in 2nd segment:

Methods in 3rd segment:

Methods in 4th segment:

Methods in 5th segment:

Methods in 6th segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 010. Newspapers and journals
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 048. Protest meetings
Classifications

Classification: Change
Cluster: Human Rights Peace
Group characterization:

- Yugoslavian students

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:
Student League
Partners:
Not known
External allies:
US and Western European anti-Vietnam protesters
Involvement of social elites:
Not known

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:
Groups in 2nd Segment:
Groups in 3rd Segment:
Groups in 4th Segment:
Groups in 5th Segment:
Groups in 6th Segment:
Additional notes on joining/exiting order:
The Student League was the only known group organizing and participating in the campaign.
Segment Length: Approximately 3 months

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:
The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Government
President Tito
League of Communists of Yugoslavia
Supporters of the Vietnam War
USA government
Nonviolent responses of opponent:
Not known

Campaigner violence:
One source states that campaigners defended themselves violently from police brutality during the April 1968 protest.

Repressive Violence:
Riot police beat protesting students during the December 1966 and April 1968 protests

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:
3 points out of 6 points

Survival:
1 point out of 1 points

Growth:
1 point out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:
The April 1968 League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) violent repression against campaigners marked the end of the anti-Vietnam war campaign. But the students continued to participate in the larger Yugoslavian student movement. Yugoslavia did take more aggressive action against the Vietnam War and entered the international movement against USA action in Vietnam by 1972.

During the late 1960s, students around the world were visibly protesting and speaking out against injustices. The Vietnam War made an especially large impact on young people. Many students in the United States of America aggressively protested their own government's military intervention in Vietnam.

Students around the world organized solidarity protests to express support for student campaigns and activists in the USA. Beginning in 1965, students in Yugoslavia also protested in solidarity with students in the USA.

The students who led the anti-Vietnam War protests were members of the Student League of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY). The LCY developed the Student League to give students an organization to use to participate in the Yugoslavian government. But in developing a student organization, students also developed autonomy from the LCY. The Yugoslav anti-Vietnam campaign was one component of a larger student movement in which students developed methods of protesting Yugoslavian government decisions which did not align with the ideals and promises of the Yugoslav socialist state.

Under the global and national political climate of autumn 1966, the Student League began to organize and implement anti-Vietnam war protests and demonstrations in Zagreb, Belgrade, and Sarajevo. The campaigners urged Yugoslav politicians to fully convey disapproval of the Vietnam War.

On 23 December 1966 Yugoslav students attempted to march from an antiwar meeting in Belgrade to the American Cultural Center and USA Embassy. Riot police met the march en route to the intended location and violently beat the students to prevent them from reaching their destination.

The campaign continued and in April 1968 300,000 Yugoslavs demonstrated in Belgrade against the Vietnam War and American policy. Police again beat the protestors. This marked the end of the Yugoslav Anti-Vietnam War campaign.

The actions of the Yugoslav state reflected its global position. Throughout the Cold War era, Yugoslavia was a strictly non-aligned state. As a socialist country which had just earned its independence from Russia, Yugoslavia had great incentive to provoke neither Soviet Russia nor the USA. The Yugoslavian state consistentlyverbally supported the campaigners; Yugoslav President Tito continually announced his support for the protests. On the other hand, police brutality on the part of the state
contradicted that verbal support. Additionally, although the Yugoslav government verbally supported the campaigners, that did not take the form of action against the U.S.

Four years after the Yugoslav anti-Vietnam War campaign, Yugoslav campaigners organized a “Week of Solidarity” for the people of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos who were suffering due to USA aggression. They used protest methods established in the Anti-Vietnam War campaign but they also shut down factories and spent an hour of each school day educating students about the Indochina struggle. During this comprehensive solidarity week, the Minister for Foreign Affairs announced Yugoslav support in the speedy end to the Vietnam War. Yugoslav activist groups and politicians publicly requested that USA troops and ally troops leave Viet Nam. Activists and politicians supported the 3 December, 1972, Declaration of the Provisionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam, which they saw as an, “agreement to establish peace as soon as possible, through a political solution based on the respect of independence and inalienable right of the people of Vietnam to decide freely on its future, without outside interference” [3].

In addition, Yugoslav Foreign Affairs Officials emphasized that, “during all sessions of the UN General Assembly for the last few years, Yugoslavia has stressed the question of legitimate rights of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Viet Nam, which was admitted by the non-aligned countries as a full member” [3]. On 29 December 1972, Yugoslavia contributed to the UN non-aligned countries joint statement which “condemned the American bombing as [an impermissible] use of force in order to impose a solution upon the people fighting for its freedom and just peace” [3]. Although these events took place four years after the climax of the Yugoslav anti-Vietnam campaign, Yugoslavs finally took a united and active stance against the USA actions in the Vietnam War.

Research Notes

Influences:
USA and European student protests against the Vietnam War influenced this campaign (1)
Yugoslav Student Movement Future Yugoslavian student campaigns against police brutality (2)

Sources:


http://www.physicalviolence.eu/user/17/researchproposal

Additional Notes:
The role of the Yugoslav state is very complicated according to source four which asserts that the Yugoslav state both instigated the campaign through the means of the Student League and violently repressed the campaign with police brutality. This source presents the conflicting behavior of the state as an intentional tool that gave the impression of an equal balance of support for and against the USA, therefore maintaining a neutral position in the Cold War era.

Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:
Sarah Gonzales, 24/03/2013

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