

# Free essay on the student movement and german terrorism

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The formation of the student's movement in Germany in the 1960s was occasioned by several reasons. One of the reasons is that West Germany, which was previously a communist, was against the activities that were being carried out by the United States in Vietnam. Of great concern was the Bombing of Vietnam in the infamous ' Operation Rolling Thunder', (Rinner 20). The U. S. involvement in this war therefore became a catalyst that resulted in active protests in Germany and in many communist nations. University students in West Germany came together to form a movement whose agenda was to advocate for peace and to condemn the capitalists aggressive influence as was observed in Vietnam.

In the 1950s for instance, active demonstrations were held in European countries condemning America's action of issuing nuclear weaponry to its allies and especially the NATO. For this purpose for example, in 1960, student organizations and some religious groups organized an " Easter March for Peace". This campaign advocated for banning of use of nuclear weapons. These strive reached its height in 1968 when Germany University students gave a lot of support for this course.

The other reason why the University student movement protested in West Germany is the increasing number of students, who qualified to join universities but could not due to limited vacancies (Levitt 120). Apparently, majority of those students who could not secure admission in the universities opposed U. S. involvement in Vietnam War. This group of youths together with those who got the opportunities for admission in the universities came together to form the West German League of Socialist Students (SDS) in 1946, (Rinner, 9). SDS and the younger generation held the view that; the

government of the day in Germany had failed to deal with the effects of the previous Nazi regime. They believed that some elements who administered during the Nazi regime and their collaborators still occupied positions in state jobs and had gone largely unpunished. In addition, they viewed the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 as an act of betrayal by the government and by extension as an influence from American. The student movement had therefore evolved from a small movement guided by moral and altruistic ideologies into a revolutionary movement that was anti-capitalistic, and anti-imperialist, (Rinner 3).

One of the prominent student leaders known as Rudi Dutschke played a major role in advancing the ideologies of the student's movement against the United States and the West Germany government. He based his opposition to the United States involvement in Vietnam War in the fact that, the U. S pursued its agenda aggressively. Dutschke and his fellow students equated the United States involvement in Vietnam with the expansionist tendencies observed with Hitler in his authoritarian rule, (Dunstan 4). This view was tagged on the fact that, the United States had already dominated the capitalist world at this time and its activities in the Vietnam were aimed at expanding its dominance to the communist world.

In 1967, the Students Movement reengineered itself into an extra-parliamentary opposition. In this year, Shah Reza Pahlevi, an Iranian leader, was touring West German. When he arrived in Berlin, protests broke out where police had to break up the conflicting groups of youths who supported Shah's visit and those who opposed it. In these protests, one youth (Benno Ohnesorg) was reported to have died out of a gunshot in the head. This issue

brought a lot of controversy with blames being directed to the police, the protesters and to the media. The Springer Press was heavily criticized for issuing biased information. The reaction of the students towards this case was guided by the idea that “ it could have been any of us” and hence it aided in solidifying the movement to advance their agenda, (Dunstan 4). The climax of the terroristic acts of the student movement was the attempted assassination of Dutschke after he was shot three times outside a pharmacy on April 11, 1968. In this incidence, the Springer Press initially reported that the Dutschke was dead. However, this information was later recanted as the news reported that he was still alive with slim chances of survival. Many youths demonstrated against the Springer Press holding the perception that it (Springer press) was responsible for creating an atmosphere that aided such incidences. In November 1968, during the trial for Horst Mahler for attempted assassination of Dutschke, hundreds of people gathered outside the Tegeler Weg Court. Violence broke up between the police and the extra-parliamentary forces comprised mainly of the youths. This event technically ended the movement as it broke into two functions. Dutschke led one function that pursued peaceful avenues of reformation that culminated to the formation of the Germany’s Green Party ten years later. The other function became known as Baader-Meinhof Gang that pursued their agenda through violent advances, (Rinner 3).

It is evident that the prior relationship between America and Germany before 1960s played a role in the formation of the Student Movement in Germany. The younger generation grew with the negative perceptions of the authoritarian rule of the Nazi regime. The change from communism to

capitalism was expected to bear positive fruits in coining development. However, the advances by the government of the day seemed not to go in tandem with these expectations, (Schissler 467; Rinner 8). The students related this with the actions of America in the Vietnam War that were seen as America's interest in dominating the communist world. In my observation, the student's perception of America was highly distorted. I believe that the failure by the government to deal with the Nazi past and the effects of Hitler's authoritarian rule was largely to blame for what was happening in Germany.

### **Works Cited**

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