

1968: A Global Perspective

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Asiatic Modes of Resistance: SDS and the NLF

Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was arguably the most influential political group in the United States in 1968, and receives much of the credit for the vibrant anti-war movement within the US. Yet SDS' anti-war successes existed alongside the anti-colonial/anti-occupation successes of the Vietnamese National Liberation Front, and both were crucial for the end of the war on Vietnam. My aim is to explore the interaction between SDS' political theory of the subject (a mix of structuralism and Third World Nationalism) and its organizing principles (avowedly "non-ideological" and "syndicalist") in contrast to the NLF's politics (Maoist) and organization (a Stalinist caricature of Leninism). This investigation will perform two functions. One, I believe by exploring the organizational-political tension within SDS, we can better understand its failure and transformation into pure excess (the Weather Underground); two, such a appraisal of these two groups will allow us to rescue the radical (and successful) political kernel within their programs in order to better critique the postmodern program for resistance against imperialism today. I plan on using Carl Davidson's "The New Radicals in the Multiversity" SDS pamphlet and selections from Ho Chi Minh's On Revolution as starting points for my investigation.