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Physicists and Vietnam

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The criticism of the use of science and technology for military purposes (especially by the U.S. in the Vietnam War) was one of the transversal themes of the various Radical Science Movements at the national level. On this point have insisted many publications of the time in journals such as Radical Science Journal, Science for the People, Sapere, Survivre et Vivre.

The presence in Europe in 1972 of some scientists of the Jason Commission was the trigger for the emergence of a series of protest activities coordinated between Italy, France, United States. In this context the community of militant physicists has been particularly active, exposing themselves in first person to face the “non-neutral” activity of their colleagues. Here are some examples:

- on June 13 the Nobel Prize for Physics Murray Gell-Mann was expelled from the Collège de France.
- During the summer schools of physics of Erice (Italy) and Cargèse (France) the presence of John Archibald Wheeler, Gell-Mann, Sidney Drell creates tensions.
- During the summer school of Varenna (Italy) a collective manifesto entitled “Statement on Vietnam” is drawn up.
- Violent protests during the international conference in Trieste entitled Development of the Physicist’s Conception of Nature.
- Varenna’s Statement on Vietnam was distributed during the Conference on High-Energy Physics in Batavia held in September (US).

With this paper my aim is to reconstruct how the theme of the war in Vietnam has favored a synchronization of the activities and claims of local Radical Science Movements.

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