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hist 195

The turning point(s)

There are many examples of turning points in the war in Vietnam and they range from a military turning point all the way down to the individuals involved weather in the valleys and jungles of Vietnam to the avenues and alleyways of America. There is great debate about where and when the turning point took place and I personally believe that it took place around the time of the tet offensive in 1968. I also believe that it took place in the hearts and minds of many soldiers that were there, policy makers here in the states, and the people on the home front who for the longest time had supported ~~us~~ U.S. military action in south East Asia.

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I've come to this conclusion after reading a few letters in the 4th section of Christian Appys book "patriots". The assignment said to chose a story that had the best example of a turning point. I found many, but the most compelling one to me was Bary Zorthian.

A good example of how the turning point happened at the home front was from all the images of battles taking place in the country being broadcasted directly into the television sets of American citizens. Vietnam was the first television war where graphic and sometimes uncensored images were a constant reminder of the horrors many young Americans could and in some cases would soon face. One of the more graphic images of the war that I still see floating around today is when general Ngyuen Ngoc Laon^{se} executed a VC prisoner of war. This was talked about by Bary Zorthian, the director of joint United States public affairs office from 1964 to 1968. I in his contribution to Appys book, Bary said that there was some back ground to what happened. He said that one of the general's good friends had just been killed by this particular VC. The background doesn't really justify what happened, but it did give you a sense of just how brutal this war or any other war was or is.

As the images were being pumped into the minds of America feelings about the war began to change, as the percentage of people who supported the war

began to slip below the 50% mark. It seemed that no matter where people went the war was topic of discussion. ^{On} such example was Life magazine ^{who} in June of 1969 ran a special that showed the faces of 242 men who were lost in Vietnam in one weeks time. At the time, there was some confusion, many Americans believed that all 242 soldiers had been killed trying to take what would later become known as Hamburger Hill. Either way it was too late. ^{By} this point the war in the public's eyes had taken an irreversible turn and it was only a matter of time before tensions would boil over on the home front.

So with that being said, the turning point happened in the year or so that followed the tet offensive and I believe it took place here at home and not in South East Asia.

To determine when the war in Vietnam really ended varies depending upon who you ask. It involves in depth thinking and there are a few answers you may come up with. Some say it was when the United States pulled out in 1972, ^{while} others may say it was fall of Saigon in 1975, ^{and} some of the men who fought there say that the war will never really be over, and that it lives on in the minds of those who served and the memory of those who didn't ~~quite~~ make it home. If you ask the chemistry major taking this history course he will tell you he thinks the war ended in 1971 at a war protest in Washington DC. This war protest was unlike the others because this one involved decorated Vietnam vets throwing back their medals in outright opposition to the war.

The idea for this being the end of the war comes after reading about Steve Sherlocks time in the army and his participation in the anti war protest. During his time in battle he was relieved of command for believing that the communists VC he was killing were people not unlike him. Due to fierce dehumanization (something that normally happens in war) his superior felt like he was unfit to lead. How does this all tie into the ending of the war? Or at least the beginning of the end? Moral ^{among} the soldiers at this time was very low, so very low in fact that soldiers lacked the military discipline that they had been taught in basic training to the point that enlisted men were getting into fist fights with officers and in some cases would even "frag" a superior. To frag someone is to throw a fragmentation grenade nearby, this

causing an injury with no way to trace it back to who threw it.

Low morale among the soldiers ultimately led to the end of the war. Many soldiers had no will to fight and in some cases would on some missions, just sit out in the jungle for a few days and then call in for a pick up, having not completed the mission. That was discussed by Christian Appy in his book and he later went on to say that wasn't always the case but it certainly did happen. Soldiers no longer wanted to be a part of it; by this time many Vietnam vets didn't support the war and organized the protest in Washington in 1971 where they threw back their medals that they had earned on the battle field.

The end of the war happened in 1971 when the veterans of Vietnam decided that they no longer wanted the medals they had earned in the war, that they had lost friends to receive and no longer supported what was by now a lost cause in Vietnam.

Much better than 1st paper.

Story choices were terrific.

Punctuation, grammar, &
punctuation were terrible, man!

It did detract from the readability
of the paper.