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Part One

A good example of a “turning point” in the Vietnam War came out of the story told by Barry Zorthian. What I took from his story was that the way the media portrayed the Tet offensive served only to fuel the fire back home. When the Tet attack made its way to the U.S embassy that’s where the majority of the media lived in Saigon, and that was going to be the majority of what the U.S. public saw.

Lack of visible military progress, dishonest elections in South Vietnam were already changing the view the U.S public, government officials, and congress had toward the war. With the Tet offensive able to hit so many places at the same time only served to further discredit reports of progress in the war. How could an enemy that was being beaten daily on the battlefield be strong enough to make such a coordinated attack?

So now you have an American public that is losing faith in its government, and a government that is losing faith in itself. Next you have a major offensive hit Saigon along with hundreds of other targets, and eventually make its way to the U.S embassy, which around the embassy it is claimed to be where the majority of the media lived. Soon after you have you have photos of dead and wounded marines on an armored personnel carrier, photos of dead Viet Cong soldiers on the embassy lawn, and a film of General Loan’s (South Vietnamese police chief) execution of a Viet Cong prisoner showing up on our 5 o’clock news and newsstands. The final blow that comes out of the story is when Walter Cronkite

shows up in Vietnam, is briefed on fully on what most people had forgotten, which was General Westmoreland had predicted that something was going to happen on Tet and that he had placed his troops accordingly. Cronkite chose not to run that story and instead was taken back by the scale of the Tet offensive and chose to deliver his famous statement, “the war is at a standstill and were not going to win. It was when LBJ replied, “If I’ve lost Walter Cronkite, then I’ve lost Middle America,” that the turning point sticks out to me. This shows how big of a role the media played in not only the American public’s view but also our own government’s view of the war and where it was heading. The Tet offensive was a highly coordinated attack but also perfectly timed. With America’s growing distaste for the war through the sixties, the floods of images, videos, and reports coming out of the aftermath of the Tet offensive served as the crest in the turning point in how America was viewing the war and how we were going to change our policies in the near future.

Part Two

I found it kind of hard to find an example of an actual “ending” to the Vietnam War other than what happened in 1975 and the story of Frank Snepp. One story that I did read that wasn’t actually an “ending” but the possible stop of escalating it even further. This was the story of Daniel Ellsberg. This was a man that rose from the ranks of the marines all the way to top-secret military planning and Pentagon consulting. In his time in top-secret military planning he was able to make a study of the origins of the war that was seven thousand pages long that showed a quarter century of aggression, broken treaties, broken treaties, stolen elections, lies, and murder.

Ellsberg claimed that President Nixon wasn’t really worried about these

documents because of the fact that they only went up to 1968 and didn't really expose any of his involvement or decision making in the war. What Nixon was worried about was the possibility that Ellsberg had knowledge and proof of his policies of threatening his ways to victory in Vietnam or possibly bombing his way to it. Ellsberg of course had none of this information and basically used Nixon's paranoia against him. When Ellsberg released the information to the press all he hoped for was an overreaction from Nixon. Nixon's overreactions lead him right into the Watergate and forced his resignation in 1974.

So if the stories were true of Nixon's plans to escalate the war with more aggressive bombing and the possibility of using nukes, then Watergate definitely brought an end to that. On top of all that with the majority of the American public now questioning or outright protesting our involvement in the war, the release of the Pentagon Papers to the New York Times in 1971 seemed to confirm the reasons for questions and protests and possibly opened more eyes to the truth behind the war.

There is a quote out of the story of Egil "Bud" Krogh, who was one of the "Plumbers" of the Watergate scandal one who ended up doing time over it. He says, "In hindsight, I'd say what Ellsberg did was extraordinarily courageous and I think he was following his highest sense of right. At the time I felt that it was a treacherous act of a traitor, but I've come to see it differently. I came to appreciate that Ellsberg was a patriot."

Again if there was truth to Nixon's plans to escalate the war, the Watergate definitely halted those plans and it also played a more significant role when Watergate forced Nixon to resign in 1974 which would soon be followed by a new congress composed more of democrats who drastically wanted to cut the

war efforts funding. This new Congress immediately voted in restrictions on funding and military activities to be phased in through 1975 and to culminate in a total cutoff of funding in 1976, bringing an end to the Vietnam War for Americans.

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