

THE ROLE OF WILLIAM FULBRIGHT IN THE MOVEMENT AGAINST THE VIETNAM WAR

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Abstract: The present paper, is dedicated to an important part of Fulbright's political activities, i.e. his role in the movement against the Vietnam war, which has received relatively little attention so far. The author of this article examines the role of the American senator William Fulbright in the opposition to the war of Vietnam. For a correct comprehension of this attitude, it is necessary, as she defends itself in the text, to know the path, so much vitally as politics, of this personage and bear in mind the awakening of the conscience of the American people for the matters of national and international politics. Since it is very difficult to pinpoint a precise date for the outbreak of the Vietnam war, this paper focuses on the period between 1960 and 1970. American domestic policy of the 1960s must be seen against the background of considerable social challenges. The civil rights movement, which fought for equal rights for women, colored people, ethnic minorities in general, and the poor. One of these social movements was the antiwar movement. Therefore, there are going to be studied the determining social ones in which the movement of protest has to be fitted against the war of Vietnam, the origin and development of this one, the principal reactions to the same one and the role recovered by William Fulbright in the tense political and social situation that the conflict provided for the United States of the sixties and seventies.

Keywords: William Fulbright, Vietnam, social movement, pacifism, citizenship, resistance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

If people in Germany have heard the name of American senator J. William Fulbright, it is at the best in connection with the scholarship that bears his name. The present paper, however, is dedicated to an important part of Fulbright's political activities, i.e. his role in the movement against the Vietnam war, which has received relatively little attention so far. Fulbright's importance for the antiwar movement can only be understood with the knowledge of his development (both personally and politically) on the one hand, and the awareness of the situation in the United States with regard to the domestic and foreign policy at that time on the other hand. This paper will consider both aspects.

2. MAIN PART: THE ROLE OF WILLIAM FULBRIGHT IN THE MOVEMENT AGAINST THE VIETNAM WAR

2.1 The different currents in the movement against the Vietnam War

Since it is very difficult to pinpoint a precise date for the outbreak of the Vietnam war (the reasons will be explained later), this paper focuses on the period between 1960 and 1970. American domestic policy of the 1960s must be seen against the background of considerable social challenges. The civil rights movement, which fought for equal rights for women, colored people, ethnic minorities in general, and the poor. One of these social movements was the antiwar movement. "Historical sociologist" Charles Tilly defined the term 'social movement' as follows: "... a sustained interaction in which mobilized people, acting in the name of a defined interest, make repeated broad demands on powerful others via means which go beyond the

current prescription of the authorities”¹.

The antiwar movement, to which all these characteristics of a “social movement” can be applied, did not come into existence as a result of the Vietnam war; rather, it grew out of the peace movement, which was mainly a product of the Cold War. This peace movement of the 1950s had no central leadership. At the beginning, it consisted of “a number of peace-minded citizens who responded to the combination of growing military threat and apparent international accommodation by promoting US initiatives for disarmament and a negotiated end to the Cold War”². The peace movement had a heterogeneous structure. It consisted mainly of two wings, i.e. “liberal internationalists and radical pacifists”³. Both had their roots in American history. The radical pacifists, who radically - i.e. categorically - objected to war, were mostly tied to a certain religious group, such as to the Quakers. The internationalists, by contrast, argued from the perspective of issues which had already emerged in the 19th century, e.g., international law, free trade, establishment of an international court of arbitration. In this way, active support was given to the foundation of the United Nations and later to the demand for a stronger position for the United Nations, e.g. by the publicist Norman Cousins. In general, the peace movement relied on individuals rather than on a firmly established organization. Journalists, who could publish their opinions and therefore fulfilled the requirement of the peace movement to educate the public, played a special role: “Between 1955 and 1963, an agglomeration of peace-minded citizens appeared in America with the intention of ending the Cold War through a combination of popular education, political persuasion, and direct action”⁴. This statement for the peace movement can largely be transferred to the later movement against the Vietnam war. The involvement of the liberal democrats in the antiwar movement is another parallel to the later antiwar movement. At this

point I would like to mention James W. Warburg, a New York banker, who demanded negotiations with the Soviet Union and who, as early as the 1950s, was one of the advocates of some sort of development aid, i.e., American commitment to the struggle against famine and poverty in the developing countries. But the peace movement also received support from natural scientists, above all physicists. Their main motive was to fight the nuclear threat.

This was the most important concern of the peace movement in the 1950s and early 1960s, when a treaty was ratified on September 24, 1962 in which Moscow and Washington agreed to avoid any further nuclear tests in the atmosphere (although underground testing of these weapons continued); “many rank-and-file peace workers concluded that ‘peace has been declared’ and scattered into related reform enterprises or into the Democratic party”⁵. However, many “peace fighters” were not satisfied with the achievements of the treaty. In spite of several large-scale demonstrations, the peace movement in these times did not receive much response from the American public.

The latter was more engaged in the growing civil rights movement, the fight of colored people for their civil rights, which in principle proceeded or was to proceed non-violently under the leadership of Martin Luther King. In addition, students carried out protest activities at the major universities. Furthermore, a certain kind of anti-culture started to develop, which expressed itself - to put it simply - in the ‘Beat’. However: “Beat romanticism seemed to be ‘more a pose and an attitude’ than a movement or ideology, more a life-style of withdrawal than a way of serious social change”⁶. Therefore, radical pacifists in particular could not identify themselves with the social withdrawal of the “Beats”. Nevertheless some cross-connections materialized between these groups and the remain-

1. Tilly, Charles, “Statemaking and Social Movements: Essays in History and Theory”, in Charles Bright; Susan Harding, *Social Movements and National Politics*. Ann Arbor, University Michigan Press 1984 cited in accordance with: De Benedetti, Charles; Chatfield, Charles, *An American Ordeal - The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era*. New York, Syracuse University Press, 1990, 1.

2. Ibid., 13.

3. Cf. ibid, 13.

4. Cf. De Benedetti, Charles, “On the Significance of Citizen Peace Activism: America, 1961-1975”. *Peace and Change*, IX-2/3 (1983), 6.

5. Cf. De Benedetti, Charles; Chatfield, Charles, *An American...*, op. cit., 63.

6. Cf. ibid., 77.

ning social movements at this time and the peace movement, which merged to form the movement against the Vietnam war.

This transition from the peace movement to the essential element of the antiwar movement cannot be assigned to an exact date. It happened step by step, in line with the increasing American commitment in Vietnam, and finally with the Americanization of the war against the Vietcong after the breakdown of the Ngo Dinh Diem regime in 1963. The administration in Washington had anticipated the resistance in South East Asia, but not “a sustained outburst of opposition at home”⁷.

We can therefore speak about an “outburst” of the antiwar movement in the years between 1963 and 1965 because social groups who protested against the established authorities joined fractions of the peace movement. These groups were the civil rights movement, an emerging new left wing, and - last but not least - the student protest movement, which clamored against the bureaucratic structures of the governmental and education systems. These social movements brought greater vehemence to the antiwar movement than had been the case in the peace movement. The developing antiwar movement strongly relied on direct but basically non-violent activities. The members of the peace movement also expressed a downright moral commitment, however, the “practitioners of the new politics worked with an immediate sense of personal responsibility for institutionalized evil”⁸. Therefore, the antiwar movement concentrated more intensely than the peace movement on social “evils”, e.g., the impoverished ghettos. So, “the new protestants lived in acute awareness of official wrongdoing and state-sanctioned evil. Rapidly they saw both becoming real in Washington’s policy in Vietnam”⁹.

This strong moral, emotional aspect of the American antiwar movement provided it with the power to mobilize the masses and be taken seriously by the government. In this connection, I would like to mention the big demonstration of October 21 and

22, 1967, when approx. 100,000 Americans set trail for Washington. During this hitherto biggest demonstration against the government of a nation waging a war there were many moving and emotional scenes of considerable symbolic meaning: approx. 35,000 demonstrators crossed the Potomac and went to the Pentagon, where they faced about 3,000 US troops and marshals intent on protecting the Pentagon. As a result of the confrontation of these two “armies”, 47 people were injured and 683 arrested, however it mainly encouraged the antiwar movement to stand against the policy of President Johnson and - if necessary - to disturb the function of the military machinery. At the same time, “the spectacle of young middle class whites confronting the armed forces of the United States on the steps of the Pentagon”¹⁰ gave the nation the impression of a major crisis, especially because an increasing number of wounded and dead people were “coming home”, bloody riots took place in the ghettos where the blacks lived, and students of the elite universities protested against the presence of “recruiters” on the campus.

An indication of the impression made on the Johnson administration could be the fact that it instructed the CIA to prepare a study on the “International Connections of the US Peace Movements”. (In a posterior Senate hearing, however, it turned out that there was no documentary evidence of a written order). This paper focuses on the international - essentially equal with communist - relations of several major figures in the peace or antiwar movement, i.e., the student leader Tom Hayden, the catholic bishop Fulton J. Sheen and two catholic priests, the brothers Daniel and Philip Berrigan. The latter three participated in international peace conferences within the framework of their clerical activities, i.e., absolutely legally (on the whole, the antiwar movement had an international orientation). The CIA was quite aware of this fact, but it did not fit into the concept, since: “The President and other administration officials did of course have the facts. But they had little use for facts that failed to sustain their suspicious or their political needs”¹¹.

7. Cf. De Benedetti, Charles, “On the Significance...”, op. cit., 11.

8. Cf. *ibid.*, 11.

9. *Ibid.*, 11.

10. Cf. De Benedetti, Charles, “A CIA Analysis of the Anti-Vietnam War Movement October 1967”. *Peace and Change*, IX-1 (1983), 31-41.

11. Cf. *ibid.*, 33.

Here, the question of the actual political influence, i.e., the particular success, of the anti-Vietnam war movement arises. Melvin Small examines this question: “Few doubt that American public opinion played an important role in the decision-making process on Vietnam during the Johnson years”¹². The effect this movement had on Johnson was surely stronger than the effect afterwards on Nixon, because “left” democratic politicians joined the antiwar movement. The most influential among them was Senator Fulbright, whose activities in this context will be considered later. According to M. Small, politicians such as Fulbright, the President’s advisors, who very often came from universities and held discussions about the antiwar movement with their colleagues and - last but not least - the influence on the private life of the politicians, constitute the links which connect the antiwar movement and the political decision makers, in particular the President: “The very irritating problem affected all members of the Johnson family, as seen vividly in Lady Bird Johnson’s memoirs”¹³.

2.2 Description of the progress of the Vietnam War

Now that the development of the antiwar movement and its involvement in the domestic situation of the United States in the period between the late 1950s and 1970 has been described, we are going to have a look at the progress of the Vietnam war, which “presents the longest military dispute of the 20th century”¹⁴. It is remarkable that this war with its unbelievable losses (“The conflict cost fifty-eight thousand American lives, well over a million Vietnamese lives, billions of dollars from the US treasury, and untold social and political trauma in America”¹⁵), was an “undeclared” war, i.e., a precise beginning date cannot be determined, there is, however, a clear connection between the American commitment in Vietnam and the beginning of the Cold War after the Second World War. The first contacts between American soldiers (agents) and

the Vietminh at the end of the Second World War tended to be friendly, which is due to the fact that the United States had at first supported the end of the colonial age: “When the unchallenged leader of Vietnam proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) on September 2, 1945, Americans and Vietminh, OSS agents and Ho Chi Minh could look back on a period of successful cooperation”¹⁶.

But this changed very soon, even before the end of the Second World War in Asia. France refused to give up its colonies (it needed the resources for the recovery program). Even in spring 1945, the Americans supported the French in their return to Vietnam, but their ulterior motive was to use them for the banishment of the Japanese. But very soon, the French Indochina war, which started more or less immediately after the return of the French, was considered to be the pushing back of communism in South East Asia and not simply a colonial war. The negotiations of the French with Ho Chi Minh, who at the beginning was willing to make compromises, were only very half-hearted. The Haiphong shellfire on November 23, 1946, gave rise to an open military conflict with the Vietminh, which resulted in a clear military failure on the part of France, i.e., the capitulation of the French troops on May 7, 1954 in Dien Bien Phu. This happened despite the United States’ “quiet” support (equipment and “civil advisors”). This clear military victory of the Vietnamese General Giap was, however, not reflected in the result of the posterior Indochina conference, which took place in Geneva, and in which the United States participated as an observer: “The results of the conference by no means reflected the military and political realities of Vietnam, but the interests of the Great Powers, which in part did not have much to do with Vietnam”¹⁷.

One of the results of the Geneva Indochina conference, which solved none of the region’s problems, was the partition of Vietnam into a Northern part

12. Cf. Small, Melvin, “The Impact of the Antiwar Movement on Lyndon Johnson, 1965-1968: A Preliminary Report”. *Peace and Change*, X-1 (1984), 2.

13. Cf. *ibid.*, 8.

14. Cf. Frey, Marc, *Die Geschichte des Vietnamkrieges - Die Tragödie in Asien und das Ende des amerikanischen Traums*. München, Verlag C.H. Beck, 1999, 9.

15. Cf. Anderson, David L., “Feature Review - Why Vietnam? Postrevisionist Answers and a Neorealist Suggestion”. *Diplomatic History*, 13 (Summer 1989), 419-425.

16. Cf. Frey, Marc, *Die Geschichte...*, op. cit., 16.

17. Cf. *ibid.*, 37.

governed by the Vietminh, and a formally independent South, which could never have been able to exist without the massive support of the United States. The precondition for this enormous influence of the United States on South Vietnam was their decision to take over the responsibility for the safety of South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. This decision was taken by President Eisenhower and his foreign secretary Dulles during the Indochina conference. The effect was that “South Vietnam - an agrarian country of fewer than fifteen million people - thus acquired an international significance out of all proportion to its size¹⁸”.

This was possible only because an almost paranoid fear of potential communist infiltration had developed domestically, which was systematically nurtured under the republican senator McCarthy: after “the traumatic impact of the loss of China to communism in 1949 ... no American President wanted to be held responsible for the loss of Vietnam to the Communists”¹⁹.

Thus, the course was set for America’s commitment in Vietnam, which seemed to grow inevitably. On the one hand, the very narrow-minded view of the world prevalent during the McCarthy era and the Cold War left no room for fundamental reorientation, on the other hand, every step which was undertaken turned out to be ineffective and required a next step to follow. Therefore, the Americans at first tried to destabilize the North using secret service methods and to strengthen the South at the same time. Moreover, South Vietnam was granted an enormous amount of economical and direct military support: “The means covered the financial plan of the South Vietnamese army as well as 80 percent of the national budget”²⁰. This made a small group of the urban population wealthy, but prevented the organization of an independent economy while boosting corruption. This was supported by the fact that the Americans - when trying to turn South Vietnam into a nation - counted on Vietnamese politicians who were incompetent and corrupt, beginning with the “Emperor” Bao Dai, who was appointed by the French and spent most

of his time with his family at the Côte d’Azur, then the catholic Ngo Dinh Diem, who was selected by the Americans themselves, up to Nguyen Van Thieu, a South Vietnamese soldier, who came to power after a coup and held power until the end of the war, practicing a complete system of nepotism and corruption.

This was only possible because the South Vietnamese rulers did not succeed in gaining a proper foothold among the population. Unlike the North Vietnamese politicians around Ho Chi Minh, they did not pursue any overriding targets, which would have meant putting aside their own immediate interests. This attitude was reflected in the complicated domestic situation of South Vietnam: Diem had his political rivals arrested or even killed; he oppressed the Buddhists and prevented the implementation of a real land reform. “His repressive government relied more and more on the army and the secret police and finally alienated substantial parts of the urban middle class and the Buddhist supporters, who were no longer prepared to let themselves be oppressed by the catholic Diem. From 1958 onwards, the deep dissatisfaction with the social conditions grew into an armed dispute between the South Vietnamese communists and the Diem government, which rapidly escalated and finally resulted in the foundation of the National Liberation Front (NLF) in January 1960, a political and military opposition alliance in which the South Vietnamese communists played a key role²¹. The North Vietnamese politician Le Duan, who originated from the South, was substantially involved in the foundation of the NLF. The NLF received increasingly massive support from the North. The so-called Ho Chi Minh path provided the requisite infrastructure. This was a broad network of paths along the Vietnamese border mainly located in Laotian and Cambodian territory and via which people and material reached the South, namely the guerillas up to 1964, who were partly former Vietminh fighters (i.e., not regular troops) and weapons. North Vietnam’s assistance for the NLF was, however, much weaker than the assistance of the United States for the South. Organization and “social com-

18. Cf. Hess, Gary R., “Historiography - The Unending Debate: Historians and the Vietnam War”. *Diplomatic History*, 18 (1994), 239-264, 244.

19. Cf. Devine, Robert A., “Historiography : Vietnam Reconsidered”. *Diplomatic History*, 12 (1988), 79-83, 82-83.

20. Cf. Frey, Marc, *Die Geschichte...*, op. cit., 55.

21. Cf. id., “Der Vietnam-Krieg im Spiegel der neueren amerikanischen Forschung“. *Neue politische Literatur*, 42 (1997), 29-47,

mitment” were essential factors for the success of the NLF. The more dissatisfied the people in North Vietnam were with the regime, the easier it was for the NLF to gain the support of the population of the rural regions by implementing serious land reform, reducing the taxes for the small-scale farmers and ensuring that the cadres - “unlike the government officials - acted as partners for the farmers”²². They did not, however, recoil from using manipulation and force.

The Americans, however, backed up the Diem regime despite any doubts. They finally took over the training of the South Vietnamese soldiers and shaped it according to their own concept for a regular war. Many of the American advisors adopted a very disparaging attitude towards the South Vietnamese (= “Gooks”). This was partly due to a lack of knowledge about the cultural historical background and, not least, to bad communication. Only very few Americans spoke French and almost none of them spoke Vietnamese. Therefore, very little attention was paid to the fact that one of the reasons for the feeble commitment of the South Vietnamese soldiers was their reluctance to accept the partition of Vietnam. The construction of the “Agrovilles” in the Mekong delta (fortified villages) also failed because the farmers, who were more or less forced to relocate, did not want to leave their family graves and very often returned to their homes immediately and turned into enemies of the Diem regime. In the United States, this problem was only publicly reflected upon a long time after the end of the war: “The truth anniversary of the fall of Saigon occasioned an outpouring of reflections on the American experience in Vietnam ... In those essays and others by prominent foreign policy analysts, the meaning of Vietnam typically found expression in references to the illusions of anti-communism, ignorance of Vietnamese culture and history, and the arrogance of power”²³ (which Fulbright mentions).

When Kennedy took office in January 1961, this

signaled the wish of many Americans to achieve a change, since Kennedy had promised in his election campaign to lead the country to “new borders”. For foreign policy, however, the guidelines so far applied. South Vietnam became the criterion of American credibility. Taking over Eisenhower’s domino theory, Kennedy was unable to terminate the war rapidly and to search an immediate negotiation solution, as had already been tried with the neutralization of Laos. At the same time he must have been aware that - in the long run - the war was not winnable. In the 1960s, there was already a kind of military opposition against the Vietnam war. Its most important supporter was General Gavin, who was also highly appreciated by Fulbright: “Importantly, the generals initially spoke against the war while the domestic consensus in support of American involvement was still strong ... Above all, the generals argued that intervention in Vietnam simply did not serve the national interest because Southeast Asia was not vital to American security and that the nation had little to gain from war there”²⁴.

This did not result in any clear decisions. Kennedy’s advisors gave him contradictory advice. He himself behaved contradictorily as well: On the one hand he announced that he was going to withdraw some of the American “advisors” from South Vietnam, on the other hand there were secret plans for an extension of military action to the North. Kennedy refused to send infantry troops to South Vietnam as foreseen in the Pentagon’s proposals, but he bolstered the American commitment considerably with material and personnel: “Therefore, a double bond had to develop between the USA and Vietnam”²⁵. During Kennedy’s short term of office, there was absolutely no way for the US administration to escape this dilemma which it had been in since the start of the war. On the contrary, by accepting and actively supporting the coup against Diem in November 1963, the United States became even more entangled in the conflict. Ngo Dinh Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu were assassinated in this

22. Cf. id., *Die Geschichte...*, op. cit., 75.

23. Cf. Hess, Gary, “The Military Perspective on Strategy in Vietnam: Harry G. Summer’s: On Strategy and Bruce Palmer’s: The 25 Year War”. *Diplomatic History*, 10 (Winter 1986), 91-92.

24. Cf. Buzzanco, Bob, “The American Military’s Rationale Against the Vietnam War”. *Political Science Quarterly*, 101 (1986), 539, 576, 562.

25. Cf. Simon, Fritz B., “Krieg-systemtheoretische Überlegungen zur Entstehung tödlicher Konflikte”. *Familiendynamik*, XXV-1 (2000), 104-130, 109.

coup, a fact which pleased the South Vietnamese and, while regretted by some of Kennedy's advisors, nonetheless gave them a feeling of relief that they had now got rid of the autocratic and corrupt Diem. Kennedy himself was very concerned. However, he was not able to take any steps. Just three weeks after the murder of Diem he himself became the victim of an assassination in Texas. The rebel South Vietnamese generals were not able to take any effective steps either. They had no concept for the country's future and were on very bad terms with one another. Only one year after Diem's death, a new revolt - this time a non-violent one - brought general Nguyen Khanh into power - a fact which the United States officially welcomed, quite knowing however, that Nguyen Khanh neither had much power nor much influence.

President Johnson, Kennedy's successor, who had little experience in foreign policy, continued to pursue the Vietnam policy of his predecessor. Finally, he "involved the United States deeply and with full awareness into a war which he could not win; at the same time he felt, however, that he could not afford to lose it"²⁶. The events in the Bay of Tonkin in early August 1964 and the resulting Bay of Tonkin Resolution could be considered to be the beginning of a regular war between the USA and North Vietnam. On August 1, 1964, the South Vietnamese had bombarded the island of Hon Me. The American destroyer Maddox was cruising the Bay of Tonkin on August 2 - in international waters, however, - a fact which the North Vietnamese associated with the shellfire on the island. Consequently, they attacked the Maddox with torpedo boats. This gave rise to an escalation. The United States sent a second destroyer. In the night of August 3/4, both warships fired, despite the fact that the North Vietnamese had not started a second attack, as asserted by American propaganda. These events must be considered the initial cause of the escalation because the Pentagon had been elaborating plans towards an escalation for quite some time, without the knowledge, however, of the Senate, and these plans also included the bombing of North Vietnam. A vaguely worded resolution was promptly accepted by the House of Representatives and the Senate and provided President Johnson with extraordinarily far-reaching authorities. Senator Fulbright cri-

ticized this course of action. On the other hand he contributed substantially to the resolution's rapid adoption.

In parallel to the escalation on the American side, there was an upsurge on the side of the North Vietnamese. After the Bay of Tonkin resolution, the leadership in Hanoi was willing to take direct military measures which had been prepared in advance. North Vietnam was supported materially and in terms of personnel both by the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, but was very skilful in avoiding unilateral dependence and pursued a relatively independent policy. Therefore, the North Vietnamese were trained at Russian military academies while the People's Republic of China sent soldiers to North Vietnam who - among other things - built roads and helped to defend the air space. This assistance by the two communist superpowers was very important for Hanoi. The deterrence potential of the two communist superpowers turned out to be as important as the material performance. "The Chinese mass troops, the Chinese possession of nuclear weapons since 1964, and the Soviet nuclear weapon arsenal prevented the government in Washington from invading North Vietnam"²⁷. In fall 1964, Hanoi sent regular troops to the South, while President Johnson hesitated with an eye on the elections, but also because he was very aware of the consequences of dispatching regular American troops. The chaotic situation in South Vietnam and a first direct attack of an American facility on November 1, 1964 (the air-force base Bien Hoa) were the reason for the bombardment of several jungle paths in Laos from December 1964. In February 1965 (after a further American facility in Pleiku had been attacked by communist guerillas) operation "Rolling Thunder" was launched, which was an air force offensive against military targets in North Vietnam. In March 1965, the American infantry finally intervened. In the course of time more and more American soldiers were transported to Vietnam. We can say that there was an American ground war in South Vietnam from July 1965 onwards. This increasing deployment of American soldiers gave rise to growing criticism of the American Vietnam policy. The criticism was directed at the increasing cruelty of the war, the violation of human rights. From the point of view of the Ame-

26. Cf. Stoessinger, J.G., *Why Nations Go to War*. New York 1998, 94. Simon, Fritz B., "Krieg...", op. cit., 112.

27. Cf. Frey, Marc, *Die Geschichte...*, op. cit., 113.

rican soldiers, who at the beginning believed that they were fighting a just war for a just cause, the situation presented itself as follows: “In ‘Pacified Areas’, the soldier had to wait for the enemy to shoot first, then determine his target before opening up (difficult since, at a distance at least, Vietnamese and Montagnards, friend or foe, all looked alike to the men in my unit). Survival in combat often hinges on snap decisions. The soldiers I served with preferred to fire immediately upon sighting movement (to hesitate could be a fatal mistake)”²⁸. The above mentioned American intervention failed to achieve the goal of stabilizing South Vietnam and weakening North Vietnam so that the latter would be willing to terminate the war soon. The political chaos in South Vietnam continued. The desertion rate in the South Vietnamese army remained at its high level. North Vietnam’s warfare became increasingly efficient and the American air attacks tended to strengthen the solidarity among the North Vietnamese soldiers. Therefore, North Vietnam had no reason to accept any half-hearted American negotiation offers. Despite the warnings of some of his advisors (Ball, Taylor) and the generally increasing criticism, Johnson left the solution of the Vietnam conflict to the soldiers. As a result, general Westmoreland demanded more and more soldiers - and he got them. The war in South Vietnam was largely Americanized. South Vietnam, which was actually allied to the United States, was massively destroyed by the use of a defoliant which contained dioxin and by extensive bombardments, also of South Vietnam, which originally should have been “protected”. The government did not provide the American public with details on the reality of the war, especially with regard to the extent of the American involvement: “No matter how the Pentagon study on the status of the escalation in Vietnam, which the New York Times has printed in extracts, are interpreted, they leave no doubt that the executive power had neither informed the parliament nor the general public about the realities of their policy, nor about the fact that President Lyndon B. Johnson was able to provide himself with authorities which had totally overruled the constitutional system of checks and balances”²⁹. Johnson had ultimately left the war in Vietnam to the soldiers. This was, howe-

ver, not the result of a clear decision, but of a hesitant attitude due to a lack of political perspective and a half-hearted fulfillment of the requirements of the army. A central problem of the army (and obviously also of the American government) was the fact that they did not have any knowledge about the Vietnamese history, language, culture and social structure. This had very destructive effects on communication with the South Vietnamese allies and moreover prevented a realistic assessment of the North Vietnamese war tactics.

For this reason it was possible to surprise the Americans with the Tet offensive, which started on January 31, 1968, on the day of the Vietnamese new year festival and introduced the end of the Vietnam war, which brought victory for North Vietnam. The Tet offensive started with a guerrilla attack on the American embassy in Saigon, then continued with guerrilla attacks of all major towns in South Vietnam, activities which the American army and the politicians had not expected by the Vietcong, since they had anticipated a North Vietnamese attack of Khe Sanh, a mountain village near the demilitarized area at a junction of the Ho Chi Minh path.

Since the Americans believed that they had to avoid a second Dien Bien Phu here, they had involved many of their own troops and thrown a tremendous amount of bombs on a small area of land. Instead of a battle with the regular North Vietnamese army, both sides ended up fighting street battles leading to extraordinarily high losses in the big South Vietnamese towns, these being largely destroyed on this occasion. Militarily, the Americans were successful together with the South Vietnamese army, which had fought seriously for the first time since it had been founded. The political winner, however, was the Vietcong or North Vietnam. The pictures of the damaged American embassy in Saigon and all other pictures which demonstrated the cruelty of this war and the extent of the country’s destruction for the first time, a country which the Americans had wanted to protect from communism, shocked the general public and deprived President Johnson and his advisors of their credibility, since they had always announced forthcoming victory.

28. Cf. Graham, Robert J., “Vietnam: An Infantryman’s View of Our Failure”. *Military Affairs*, XLVIII-3 (July 1984), 133-139, 133.

29. Cf. Scharlau, Winfried, “Essay“. *Das Pentagon informiert oder der Propaganda-Apparat einer Weltmacht*. Hamburg, Rororo aktuell, 1971, 7.

The antiwar movement grew stronger and more vehement. And last but not least, the high cost of the war prevented the funding of social programs which had originally been very important for Johnson. All this caused Johnson to submit a negotiation offer to Hanoi in 1968. Hanoi actually agreed to the initiation of peace negotiations in Paris.

Both parties took up the negotiations in Paris, but did not really agree with the idea of a negotiated solution. Instead, they used the Paris peace discussions as a break to recover and as an opportunity to change their strategy. North Vietnam was largely spared from bombing. In South Vietnam, however, the war grew more and more cruel. The Americans tried to increasingly withdraw themselves and to leave the war more to the Vietnamese by equipping the South Vietnamese soldiers better and forcing them to act more offensively and to fight local guerrilla troops through close combat in small mobile units. "The action was extremely bloody and brutal, but successful: After the NLF had suffered enormous losses in the Tet offensive, the guerrillas - which were decimated anyway - were further weakened"³⁰. Moreover, the Americans tried to supplement this change in strategy with an "Accelerated Pacification Program" which was designed to bring the rural population under the influence of Saigon and which yielded only minimal success.

During this stage of the Vietnam war, the presidential elections in the United States came into their final phase. The democrats had nominated Hubert Humphrey, and the Republicans Richard Nixon, who was called 'Tricky Dick' by friend and foe. This turned out to be appropriate since he won the election campaign by a relatively small margin. His claim that he had a secret plan to terminate the Vietnam war was vital for his victory. However, such a plan did not exist at all. Nixon was determined to terminate the war, since he saw that it hugely inhibited the USA with regard to its global policy. In terms of his assessment of the situation, Nixon agreed with the Harvard professor Henry Kissinger, whom he appointed to be his security advisor. They both believed that they could terminate the war by using their contact to the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, which both supported North Vietnam. The population had to be

prepared for the end of the war and had to be made aware of a situation which was not a victory of the United States. Moreover, South Vietnam should not be simply deserted. The de-Americanization of the war - initiated by Johnson and now called 'Vietnamization' - was continued. The same applied to the pacification program. "This Vietnamization was also referred to as the 'Nixon Doctrine' (July 1969) and had an effect that even surpassed Indochina: The President declared that from now on the United States would go on to support their friends and allies in Asia, but would only participate in military conflicts in exceptional cases"³¹.

Despite the fact that Nixon and Kissinger explained that they were going to terminate the Vietnam war as soon as possible, it became at first more intensive, because the Ho Chi Minh path had been massively bombed, mainly in Cambodian areas. In addition, specially trained and skilled land troops were sent up. This led to a general expansion of the war to Cambodia, without, however, weakening the North Vietnamese, who retreated more inland in Cambodia. In parallel to the actual extension of the war, Nixon conducted a secret diplomacy with the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. He had the idea that this policy could force Hanoi to terminate the war. Once more, the ability of North Vietnam to accept the support of both communist great powers and at the same time pursue a relatively independent policy was underestimated. Therefore, North Vietnam was able to strengthen its military power and thus its position in the Paris negotiations. After the experiences of 1945, the North Vietnamese leadership did not want to accept any kind of peace which would not result in the independence and reunification of Vietnam.

Nixon did not inform his compatriots about the "mad man theory" (i.e., Nixon was so "mad" that he would take absolutely any measure to terminate the war, even a nuclear attack) which was demonstrated towards and practiced against North Vietnam. He tried to draw public opinion on his side and to weaken the antiwar movement by announcing the withdrawal of thousands of American soldiers and - last but not least - by replacing the general compulsory military service with a lottery, which ended the privileged position of the students. With

30. Cf. Frey, Marc, *Die Geschichte...*, op. cit., 174.

31. Cf. *ibid.*, 190.

regard to domestic policy, Nixon's strategy was successful in the short term. Moreover, Nixon held a patriotic speech which was broadcast on television on November 3, 1969, and which brought him high ratings for his policy in the opinion polls. His reproach that the antiwar movement was sabotaging his peace policy boosted the stab-in-the-back legend in connection with the Vietnam war: "The reappearance of the stab-in-the-back theme in connection with the Vietnam war is but a repetition of a familiar pattern of response to defeat.

Anecdotal and quantitative evidence - personal conversations, 'man-on-the-street' comments, the apparent popularity of militant statements by public, and public-opinion polls - suggest that a sizable minority of Americans in the postwar era accepted some of the essential beliefs of a stab-in-the-back perspective vis-à-vis the Vietnam war"³².

But Nixon very soon came under pressure from all sides. After the national guard had shot four students during a demonstration on the campus of the Kent State University in Chio, people protested more vehemently than ever against the Vietnam war throughout the country. The population of both the United States and South Vietnam were becoming war-weary. The foreign committee, which was chaired by Fulbright, withdrew the "Bay of Tonkin Resolution" and recommended the Congress to do the same, which it did on December 31, 1970. Nixon believed that he could "bomb on" to end of the war. After the downfall of the Cambodian ruler Prince Sihanouk (most probably, the CIA contributed to his downfall), Nixon agreed to the invasion of Cambodia by American and South Vietnamese troops. He did so despite the fact that his foreign secretary and minister of defense advised against it. The military success of this offensive was very limited. From a political point of view it was disastrous. It favored the expansion of the Khmer Rouge's power and the subsequent genocide in Cambodia, increased the war weariness of the Americans, increasingly lowered the morale of the American soldiers, dramatically increased the discipline and drug problems and the psycho-social difficulties of the soldiers who returned, who were treated rather disparagingly by the population.

Parallel to the war situation, Nixon and Kissinger

had pursued a secret diplomacy. Kissinger prepared Nixon's visit to Peking in 1972, which was internationally considered a sensation. Furthermore, he prepared Nixon's visit to Moscow in February 1972. It became clear that both Peking and Moscow were interested in an improvement in their relations to Washington and were not going to support Hanoi unconditionally. This recognition bore consequences both for the North Vietnamese and for the American leadership. Since the two communist superpowers considered themselves competitors with regard to their commitment in North Vietnam, they both supported the North Vietnamese generously, providing them with commodities and modern weapon systems. This enabled General Giap to prepare a traditional war, which he initiated with the so-called Easter Offensive in March 1972. The North Vietnamese troops were equipped with Soviet tanks and attacked from different directions. They literally overran the South Vietnamese army and pushed forward to regions about 70 km outside of Saigon. But since Nixon could not accept a South Vietnamese defeat during the election year and serious objections by the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union were not to be expected, Nixon ordered another enormous escalation by re-launching the air attacks on Hanoi. He had the port of Haiphong mined and commanded a sea blockade of North Vietnam, activities in which North Vietnam suffered harder losses than at any time previously. Finally, both sides forced themselves to terminate this war of heavy losses as soon as possible and negotiated the agreements for a ceasefire agreement in Paris in fall 1972, represented by the two mediators Le Duc Tho and Kissinger. The latter had not paid appropriate attention to the involvement of the South Vietnamese leadership under General Thieu. Therefore Nixon assured him of further support after a ceasefire too. After he had won the election in November 1972, Nixon believed that he could even improve the conditions of the agreement for his ally and that he had to demonstrate American strength to the world. Therefore he ordered the Christmas bombing. Between December 18 and 29, he ordered a final massive bombardment of North Vietnam and triggered off emphatic international protests. On January 27, 1973, the 'Agreement on Termination of the War and the Restoration of Peace'

32. Cf. Kimball, Jeffrey P., "The Stab-in-the-Back Legend and the Vietnam War". *Armed Forces and Society*, XIV-3 (Spring 1988), 433-458, 436.

was finally undersigned in Paris. It contained the following: “The actions had to be stopped and the United States had to commit themselves to a complete withdrawal within 60 days. The North Vietnamese troops remained in the South; therefore Hanoi promised to release all American prisoners of war. The ‘National Council for Peace and Unity’ would resume its activities, while the country was temporarily administered by the government of the NLF or Saigon. The demilitarized area was given the status of an interim demarcation line and therefore represented no internationally acknowledged border. In an additional secret protocol, the Nixon government granted North Vietnam recovery programs which amounted to billions of dollars. Moreover, the agreement incorporated a termination of foreign military operations on the territory of Laos and Cambodia”³³.

This ceasefire agreement was an essential step towards the end of the war, but not its actual end. At least, Kissinger was completely aware that the South Vietnamese government could not survive very long without the personnel and material support of the United States. These resources failed very soon since the American Congress granted only very little funding for South Vietnam and the South Vietnamese army. The latter did not have a clear target which would have been worthy of any very great commitment. While South Vietnam - without massive American support - drowned in lethargy and chaos, North Vietnam prepared itself for the final military decision. The Ho Chi Minh path was concreted and a pipeline was built which reached from the Chinese border to the South of Cambodia. Moreover, supply stations for the troops were established. After several repeated small violations of the ceasefire agreement, the North Vietnamese troops began the conquest of South Vietnam in March 1975, their target being reunification. Due to the lacking South Vietnamese resistance and the decision of the United States not to intervene anymore (the United States were weakened by the Watergate affair and Nixon’s resignation), the capture advanced rapidly. On the first of May 1975, the Vietnam war was finally terminated through the invasion of

Saigon by North Vietnamese troops and the capitulation of the South Vietnamese General Duong Van Minh. Since the American ambassador had not foreseen the events clearly enough, the evacuation of the Americans who lived in Saigon and of their South Vietnamese allies was started too late and only poorly prepared. This led to the terrible scenes of desperate people climbing into helicopters which took off from the hills of the American embassy. Spread by the media, these scenes were so traumatizing for the Americans that they tried to erase the Vietnam war from their memories: “When the helicopter rose in flight from the roof of the doomed US embassy in Saigon a decade ago, Americans hoped they had finally left Vietnam behind them. For years afterward there was a widespread effort in the United States to put the Indochina experience out of mind”³⁴.

2.3 Short biography of William Fulbright

It would seem that J. W. Fulbright, whose political life was largely determined by the Vietnam war and who had been the chairman of the Senate’s Foreign Relations Committee for decades, a powerful and influential opponent of several American Presidents, was also erased from the American memory. Only little information on Fulbright surfaced after the end of the Vietnam war. This paper shall now describe the life history of this man who was “a figure of controversy during much of his public career”³⁵.

Fulbright was a southerner. He was born in Rothville, Missouri, on April 9, 1905, the fourth of the six children of Jay Fulbright and Roberta Waugh. They both came from renowned local families and both gained university or college degrees, namely his mother as a teacher and his father as an economist: “In October of 1894 Jay Fulbright, 28, and Roberta Waugh, 20, married. The ceremony not only marked the consolidation of Rothville manners and customs in the union of two of its leading families, but the mixture of two very powerful and different personalities”³⁶. Both families had reached a certain level of wealth through the cultivation of far-

33. Cf. Frey, Marc, *Die Geschichte...*, op. cit., 212.

34. Cf. Fromkin, David; Chace, James, “What are the Lessons of Vietnam?”. *Foreign Affairs*, 63 (Spring 1985), 722-746, 722.

35. Cf. Harper, Alan D., “Fulbright, James William”, in John E. Garraty; Jerome L. Sternstein, *Encyclopedia of American Biography*. New York, Harper & Row, 1974, 392-394.

36. Cf. Wood, Randall Bennett, *Fulbright - A biography*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1995, 4.

ms. Both grandparents of the mother had supported the Confederates during the civil war. One of the grandfathers had fought actively on the side of the Confederates and had therefore been forced to flee to Texas for some time.

William Fulbright was born in a period of radical change, both with regard to the political situation (Theodore Roosevelt had been elected President), which saw the start of an economic boom, and with regard to his family: His father who as an only son had in fact been prepared to take over his parents' farm, was weary of the hard labour on the farm. With the financial assistance of his parents and parents-in-law, he bought a local bank and "proved to be a natural banker. He had drive and ambition; more important he had judgment and instinct"³⁷. Jay Fulbright undertook several exploratory trips to Memphis and settled down in 1907 with his family in Fayetteville (Arkansas), to where his parents had already retired previously. In 1871, the university of Arkansas was founded in this town. This life with the social and cultural impulses from the university was very important, especially for his mother: "Public affairs, which had always fascinated Roberta, constituted a stimulating backdrop for her delicious sense of personal security"³⁸. His father pursued his business with big success and involved many members of the clan - e.g., two brothers of his wife - in his business activities. But the more successful Jay Fulbright was as a business man, the less present he was as father. His children remembered him as strict, harsh and unapproachable. He could show affection mainly to his younger son William whom he took along to many activities. This preferential treatment by both parents led to more or less lifelong problems with his older and much less successful brother Jay (Jack).

Despite the fact that his parents pursued different political directions, ("Jay was a pragmatist" ... although "the scion of a Virginia slaveholding family ... he was a Republican ... because it was the party of property and business". "Roberta ... was a staunch Democrat ..."³⁹, they did, however, absolutely agree with regard to the importance of a good education. At the instigation of his mother,

William went to a special secondary school which was connected to the college and the university and where politics and social sciences were already a subject. His father very much appreciated practical work during the holidays, either farm work or work at one of his companies. After he had finished school, William Fulbright went to the university of Arkansas in Fayetteville, which was at that time considered very provincial and established more faculties (also a law school) only in the period between 1920 and 1924, when it rose to a higher level. At that time, Fulbright's plans for the future were rather vague. He visited English courses, became a member of different clubs and was finally elected for President of the student parliament. For the rest "he made respectable grades because his father and mother expected it of him"⁴⁰.

This rather easy and contemplative life changed abruptly in 1923. Ida Fulbright died in the first half of the year. William's father Jay had visited his mother despite his own illness and stayed with her until she died. On July 23, 1923, shortly after his return, Jay Fulbright died due to a fever at the age of only 56 years. This sudden death of his father shocked William and his mother, since they were the members of the family who were the closest to Jay. Apart from the grief, the father's death brought extreme family and economic problems. One brother of Roberta's who had worked in the Fulbright company system and who was a shareholder had already died in 1922. Since the widow wanted to be bought out, certain liquidity problems arose. In addition, Jack, the older brother of William who wanted to succeed his father as head of the family, behaved very incompetently. His mother urged William to leave university to assist her in managing the business activities. In 1922, however, he returned to university and gained a degree in history in January 1924. Furthermore he gained a Rhodes scholarship, which influenced his future life substantially. He bridged the time he had to wait for the beginning of his scholarship with a course in law.

From 1924 to 1929, William Fulbright studied history and political science at Oxford. He went to Pembroke College, where Ronald Bachanan Mc-

37. Cf. *ibid.*, 5.

38. Cf. *ibid.*, 13.

39. Cf. *ibid.*, 13.

40. Cf. *ibid.*, 15.

Callum was his tutor: “A Scottish Presbyterian and a devoted member of the Liberal party, he built a career dedicated to scholarship, writing numerous books on British politics and earning respect as an authority on the study of British elections”⁴¹.

McCallum and Fulbright enjoyed a lifelong friendship. They saw each other from time to time and corresponded extensively on all political items: “As Fulbright’s career matured, McCallum became a supportive critic who provided Fulbright with a view of world politics as seen through the eyes of an English Liberal. Although the advice granted was not always adopted, it was genuinely respected and gave balance to Fulbright’s own thought”⁴². This friendship with McCallum clearly shows the enormous profit Fulbright gained from his Oxford years for his future life (besides his academic degree), i.e., the opportunity to become familiar with a view other than the American conception of the world or philosophy of life. During his study years, he traveled across Europe, where he visited France, spent a summer in Lithuania and Poland with a fellow student and terminated his sojourn in Europe with an extensive tour, which also led him to the Balkan region, accompanied by a journalist. In addition, his studies - which Fulbright considered much more intellectual than at his home university -, furthered his interest in other cultures and his intellectual development. Last but not least he made friendships with other scholars who went on to pursue scientific and/or political careers just like Fulbright himself.

Having returned to the United States in spring 1929, Fulbright’s plans for the future were at first not very clear. He was attracted to the idea of becoming a university teacher but felt obliged to help his mother who was governing the family empire (after the eldest son had retired), which also included a newspaper. She was very successful in her activities and had the strong ambition that her son should study law and pursue a political career afterwards. Fulbright realized all these ideas. He returned to Fayetteville for a short time, then studied law at the George Washington University

in Washington. Shortly before completion of his education, Bill Fulbright applied for a position at the antitrust division in the ministry of justice. He started to work there immediately after his examinations, i.e., from 1934 to 1935. The next vocational stage was employment as an instructor in law at the George Washington university from 1935 to 1936. He then finally returned to Fayetteville, Arkansas, where he took a post as a lecturer in law from 1936 to 1939 and then became President of the university from 1939 to 1941. Fulbright was considered an intellectual, demanding and well-prepared university teacher. His election for university President, however, was quite surprising. Amongst other reasons, because there was a much more experienced competitor. But whatever the reason for his election might have been, Fulbright was very much committed to this office: “Fulbright did have a philosophy of education when he became President of the University of Arkansas. The function of the state’s leading institution was to prepare the best of Arkansas’ youth to govern the state and even the nation ...”⁴³. Moreover, Fulbright, who had developed a great interest in foreign policy since his studies in Oxford, made use of his position to formulate his foreign policy ideas in his lectures. Altogether, this office was an important preparation for subsequent political offices: “... he found himself confronted with a multitude of complex problems in administering a large university situated in the poorest of the states”⁴⁴. In spring 1942, Fulbright got the opportunity to put his political ideas into practice. Clyde Ellis, Fulbright’s friend and former fellow student, informed him that he wanted to stand for the Senate and give up his bench in Congress. Bill Fulbright therefore got the opportunity to apply for Ellis’ seat in the Congress in the “Primary” and represent Fayetteville’s third Congress district. There were only a few days left for him to make up his mind. He discussed the matter with the two most important women in his life, his mother Roberta and his wife Elizabeth. Both women urged him to start a political career on the occasion of the Congress elections in 1942. Fulbright was proud that “It (the cost of the election campaign) was all paid by me, my mother, and

41. Cf. Gunn, Herb, “The Continuing Friendship of James William Fulbright and Ronald Buchanan McCallum”. *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 33 (1984), 416-433, 416.

42. Cf. *ibid*, 417.

43. Cf. Woods, Randall Bennett, *Fulbright...*, op. cit., 57.

44. Cf. Johnson, Haynes; Gwertzman, Bernhard M., *Fulbright - The Dissenter*. New York, Doubleday & Co., 1968, 42.

Betty ... It was a family affair”⁴⁵.

In 1932, Fulbright married Elizabeth (Betty) Williams, who came from a prominent and wealthy Philadelphia family. Just like Fulbright himself, she had lost her father relatively early and was brought up and educated by an energetic woman. Betty Fulbright was sent to exclusive schools but did not attend any college. She completed her education at a finishing school and then traveled in Europe: “She never aspired to be an intellectual or even a professional. Her goal, and she believed it to be a worthy one, was to be a wife and a hostess”⁴⁶. The couple had two daughters: Elizabeth (Betsy) who was born in 1936, and Roberta Waugh (Bosey), who was born in 1938. The Fulbrights acquired a farm near Fayetteville, which Betty Fulbright established and furnished very carefully, making the place representative enough to receive guests and comfortable enough for the family to live in. Despite the fact that there was cattle on the farm: “soon Rabbit’s Foot Lodge was transformed into a country show place”⁴⁷. The farm turned into a refuge for the family. During the decades in which the family lived in Washington, William regularly spent some time in Fayetteville to manage his political activities. Betty Fulbright accompanied her husband during all stages of his political life. She supported him very eagerly: “Betty Fulbright maintained an active social life. She is an outgoing person, without pretense, and she keeps the Fulbright private life pleasant and as free of stress as possible”⁴⁸.

Fulbright’s campaign for his election to Congress was preceded by a very humiliating event, i.e., his dismissal as university President, instigated by the governor of Arkansas, Homer Adkins, who had just been elected. He was considered a former Ku Klux Klan member. “Homer Adkins was a Bible-belt demagogue with an inferiority complex and a taste for revenge. He fancied himself as having come up the hard way, and he was more than ready to lay the

Fulbrights low ... because they appeared to him to be privileged aristocrats”⁴⁹.

The dismissal itself and therefore his role as an underdog was rather useful for Fulbright’s election campaign. He tried to contradict his image of a privileged aristocrat by visiting the villages and presenting himself as “just plain Bill, capable, no matter what the opposition said, of ploughing a straight furrow, milking a cow, pitching hay, and shoveling manure”⁵⁰. This problem - i.e., being an anglophile cosmopolitan and extremely sophisticated and educated historian and jurist on the one hand, and a planter from the real conservative South to which he was emotionally connected on the other - accompanied Fulbright through his entire political life, where he represented the federal state of Arkansas as a Senator for almost 30 years, namely from 1945 to 1975. The next chapter will focus on details of this long political life, in which the Vietnam war played an outstanding role. It should be pointed out here that it was not only an obstacle to belong to two different worlds, but also a privilege, because it enabled Fulbright “to act as a bridge between conservative supporters and liberal opponents of the war”⁵¹.

The Vietnam war was so significant for Fulbright’s long and successful political career that its end also signified the end of his career. Fulbright, who, it is said, was in very good health and was very resistant to stress, started to feel exhausted quite often and followed the advice of his wife Betty, “that he needed to get away, not to Arkansas again ... but really away”⁵². Fulbright had focused on a new important foreign policy topic, i.e., on the Near East conflict. He found out that a balanced Near East policy was almost as difficult to implement as the termination of the American commitment in Vietnam and the adjacent countries. Finally Carl H. Marcy (“Fulbright’s Kissinger”), Fulbright’s most important collaborator for many years, retired at the end of 1973: “On the last day of 1973, Carl H.

45. Cf. *ibid*, 54.

46. Cf. Woods, Randall Bennett, *Fulbright...*, op. cit., 39.

47. Cf. *ibid*, p. 52.

48. Cf. Johnson, Haynes; Gwertzman, Bernard M., *Fulbright...*, op. cit., 223.

49. Cf. Woods, Randall Bennett, *Fulbright...*, op. cit., 62.

50. Cf. Johnson, Haynes; Gwertzman, Bernard M., *Fulbright...*, op. cit., 55.

51. Cf. Woods, Randall Bennett, “Dixie’s Dove: J. William Fulbright, the Vietnam War and the American South”. *The Journal of Southern History*, LX-3 (August 1994), 533-552, 534.

52. Cf. *id.*, *Fulbright...*, op. cit., 636.

Marcy retired as chief of staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Although he was only sixty, Marcy had been with the SFRC since 1950 and had served as its staff director for eighteen years... It was time for him to devote his energies to writing and sailing. In addition, he sensed that Fulbright's attention was beginning to wander, that the monumental will that Marcy had so counted on was beginning to diminish"⁵³.

Unlike his assistant, Fulbright was not wise enough to retire on time. After his initial election as Senator, Fulbright had never had to make a special effort to become re-elected. The situation after the end of the Vietnam war had fundamentally changed. The election campaign of 1973/74 focused on social topics in which Fulbright had never had a special interest. The election campaign was organized very half-heartedly. Fulbright suffered defeat which embittered both himself and his wife Betty, both of whose health was not in the best state anyway. The way in which Fulbright made the Zionists responsible for his failure was somewhat paranoid. In fact, the electors had a hostile attitude towards Fulbright because he did not unconditionally support the Israelis, but advised them to find a solution with the Arabs ("land for peace"). Betty and William Fulbright did not return to Arkansas as was actually planned. They remained in Washington, where they had spent the longest period of their long life together. Fulbright was not altogether resistant to influence. He did not take on any public office anymore: "After some deliberation Fulbright rejected Kissinger and Ford's offer to become ambassador to the Court of St. James: Betty's health had not improved during the course of the campaign and, perhaps more important, were he to work for the administration, he would have to tailor his opinions to conform to official policy"⁵⁴.

There is not much information about the relatively long time after Fulbright's retirement from the Senate. He worked as an advisor for the renowned Washington Lawyer Company Hogan & Hartson and gained international acclaim, i.e., Japan's Foundation award in 1974, Onassis Int. Prize

1989. There was another important publication in 1989: *The Price of Empire*. Betty Fulbright must have died in the late 1970s. She failed to recover from a heart operation she had to undergo in 1975, therefore the Fulbrights could no longer undertake their travels abroad as they had intended. In 1990, William Fulbright got married a second time to Harriet Mayor⁵⁵. He died on February 9, 1998, in Washington. It seems nobody paid much attention to his death.

2.4 Description of the political activities of William Fulbright, especially his importance for the movement against the Vietnam War

What had stopped Fulbright from concluding his public life as ambassador in London, i.e., his inner and outer independence to make up his own mind and his willingness to and interest in public dispute, showed up right at the beginning of his political career as a newly elected member of the Congress: "Fulbright had demonstrated an unusual degree of independence, or foolhardiness, for a new member by being one of the only ninety-four Representatives to vote against continuing the sobriquet of the House Un-American Activities Committee"⁵⁶. As a member of the Congress, Fulbright saw his chance to realize his political ideas, especially the one of internationalism. He profited from the contact with his friend Ronald McCallum and developed the concept that "something more was needed, namely an international organization that at the same time reflected existing power relationships and provided a mechanism for peaceful change within and among nations. For such an institution to be successful, the United States - sure to be the world's richest and most powerful nation into the foreseeable future - would have to embrace it"⁵⁷. This "Internationalism" was based on the idea that people or nations have a fundament of ideas and moral principles (love for the family, observation of contractual obligations, abhorrence of torture and persecution, and finally distrust of undemocratic governments). In addition, it was believed that there were certain common constellations of political and economic institutions. The idea was that

53. Cf. *ibid.*, 652.

54. Cf. *ibid.*, 672.

55. Cf. *The International Who is Who 1992-93*, 56th edition.

56. Cf. Woods, Randall Bennett, *Fulbright...*, op. cit., 74.

57. Cf. Johnson, Haynes; Gwertzman, Bernard M., *Fulbright...*, op. cit., 64.

the USA was obliged to defend these principles, which represented Western civilization. In this framework, other nations should receive assistance in the development of their own kind of democracy. His two years as a Congressman were only a short time in Fulbright's long political career. However, they set the course for the future. Fulbright committed himself to an emphatic foreign policy, tried to win politicians as well as the American public over to his point of view by already organizing public hearings in the House of Representatives, which he prepared very carefully: "Fulbright thinks of himself as a teacher. His Senate critics acidly call him 'the schoolman'. His faith is to seek the truth and bring it to his classroom: the Foreign Relations Committee..."⁵⁸.

Immediately after his election to Congress, Fulbright succeeded not only in bringing his concern into "his classroom", but also in awakening considerable attention in the general public. At the time of Fulbright's membership, the House of Representatives was not very active and did not have a very high reputation. On the one hand this was due to the quality of its members ("In fact, neither the House nor the Senate could claim to be a community of intellectuals"⁵⁹), but it was also due to the fact that the USA was at that time a nation at war, and "Members of Congress had to support the war, and they had to defer to Roosevelt and his minions; but they did not have to like it"⁶⁰. Republicans and Democrats from the South had quietly come to terms with the situation and decided to save their energy and power for the time after the war. The new members William Fulbright and Clare Booth Luce were exceptional figures in this not very committed Congress. Clare Luce was the wife of the "Life" magazine editor Henry Luce. She had, however, become famous as an actress and author of a successful play. Clare Luce held a speech as newly elected member of the Congress (without the usual waiting time) in the framework of which she announced her absolutely reactionary attitude and where she exposed the American vice President to ridicule because of his postwar plans. Fulbright's reaction to this was a very carefully elaborated

speech with public appeal, which brought him international popularity and appreciation. Here, he was able to gain influence in the Congress which was unusually strong for freshmen. He was substantially involved in the foundation of the United Nations: "After all, as a freshman Representative in 1943 he led the United States out of its isolationism into a system of world organization"⁶¹. The resolution which he submitted "officially ended American isolationism and led directly to the founding of the United Nations"⁶².

This work in the Congress prepared Fulbright effectively for his function as Senator of Arkansas from 1945 to 1974 and as chairman of the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee from 1959 to 1974, when he became the most important critic of the United States' commitment in Vietnam. But at first in 1944, Fulbright had to win a very dirty election campaign against the governor of Arkansas, the racist Homer Adkins. Fulbright and his team counted on the assistance of the university graduates, who still remembered him as the university President and who were proud of Fulbright, who had gained international acclaim. The farmers from the eastern part of Arkansas supported Fulbright since they considered him one of themselves, which he somehow was (and remained). These farmers associated Fulbright's internationalism with open markets and low taxes. Homer Adkins, however, addressed electors who were uneducated, not interested in international events and not able to be proud of a personality such as Fulbright. Adkins and his team relied on their prejudices, insulted Fulbright as "nigger lover", "communist sympathizer", accused him of having connections to the "radical labor movement", of not having fought as a soldier in the Second World War, and of being an "internationalist".

After initially hesitating, Fulbright rejected the accusations in his first Senate election campaign. The election campaign, however, did not provide him with the possibility to explain his sober and differentiated view of the American political system, especially with regard to its suitability for other

58. Cf. Coffin, Tristram, *Senator Fulbright – Portrait of a Public Philosopher*. New York, E.P. Dutton & Co, 1966, 12.

59. Cf. Woods, Randall Bennett, *Fulbright...*, op. cit., 77.

60. Ibid, 77.

61. Cf. Coffin, Tristram, *Senator...*, op. cit., 13.

62. Cf. ibid, 13.

peoples and cultures: “Implicit in this view was the assumption that, given the freedom to choose, all people would opt for a society characterized by democracy, individual liberty, and free enterprise. By late 1945, however, Fulbright’s sense of cultural relativity had sharpened. He observed to the Senate that capitalism was not ‘divine and inviolable’, something handed down by the Almighty from above. It had worked for America because a particular set of circumstances and material conditions had prevailed at a particular time in history. The people of the earth, Fulbright proclaimed, should be free to develop their own economic and political traditions”⁶³.

Fulbright was elected to the Senate despite his education and wealth because he had a certain symbolic significance for Arkansas. His electors hoped that he would encourage Washington to bear a positive view of Arkansas. This was in line with Fulbright’s ideas, since this first election for Senator had confirmed to him “that it was possible to immerse himself in the great questions of the day and simultaneously to survive as an Arkansas politician”⁶⁴.

This effort - to deal with important political questions while retaining the close bond with his home - not only had election-strategic reasons, but it fitted Fulbright’s internal attitude. The American civil war, in which Fulbright’s ancestors had also been involved, had only been a few generations ago. Therefore, the memories of his family were still too vivid to consider the civil war from a certain distance and just regard it as a piece of history: “The key to the Southern past is that Southerners are Americans who have taken on an additional identity through conflict with the North”⁶⁵.

This specific Southerner identity influenced Fulbright’s commitment against the Vietnam war in several regards, including a certain lust for “conflict”, which ran through his political life, but also in his identification with Vietnam and the Vietnamese people. In 1966, Henry Cabot Lodge, who was then the American ambassador in South Viet-

nam, submitted a report, in which he pointed out noticeable similarities between the Vietnamese and the American Southerners: “Like American southerners, the Vietnamese possessed a strong sense of family as well as long experience of farm tenancy and share cropping. Neither people had enjoyed a strong tradition of economic or political democracy. Moreover, both Vietnam and the South had proved remarkably resistant to reform - and for roughly the same reasons”⁶⁶.

Regarding his “resistance” to the necessity of internal reforms, Fulbright certainly was a typical Southerner but by no means a dumb racist like Barry Goldwater, with whom Fulbright battled out several disputes in the Senate. Fulbright saw the considerable social problems of the American South, especially with regard to the blacks living there, but he tended to concentrate on gradual change, especially through better education for the black population. Therefore, he rather distanced himself from the civil rights movement. In March 1966, he even signed the “Southern Manifesto” which he had mitigated together with a collaborator, but which still very clearly criticized the supreme court because of its judgment with regard to the integration of black people. This strategy of Fulbright was very disappointing for many of his supporters: “Fulbright’s correspondents could not understand how the author of a celebrated exchange program, a humanitarian, a man who had stood alone against McCarthy, could have, as one wrote, ‘repudiated your earlier splendid work’”⁶⁷. With his signature Fulbright had - regardless of his personal attitude - determined his affiliation to the Southern block of the Senate. This secured him re-election to the Senate (1956 was an election year), but also the support of the other southern Senators and therewith power and influence in other areas.

Fulbright had always concentrated on foreign policy and continued to do so. Right after his election to the Senate he tried to become a member of the Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) of the Senate. He achieved this goal only in 1948. In 1959 he became chairman of the SFRC and kept this posi-

63. Cf. Woods, Randall Bennett, *Fulbright...*, op. cit., 75.

64. Cf. *ibid.*, 100.

65. Cf. Hackney, Sheldon, “The South as a Counterculture”. *The American Scholar*, 42 (Spring 1973), 283-293, 285-286.

66. Cf. Woods, Randall Bennett, “Dixie’s...”, op. cit., 533-552.

67. Cf. Johnson, Haynes; Gwertzman, Bernard M., *Fulbright...*, op. cit., 143.

tion until 1974, when he was voted out of the Senate. In the period between 1945 and 1948, Fulbright started to develop the exchange program which bears his name and which enabled foreign students and scientists to gain further education or to do research work in the United States. On the other hand, it also offers Americans the opportunity to gain experience abroad. This program was always very important for Fulbright, especially because it started at a time in which the Americans had only very little knowledge about other countries and cultures.

During his long term of office in the Senate, Fulbright always had close contact with all Presidents. Sometimes, he was even considered for the position of Secretary of State, ultimately under Kennedy. Fulbright had strongly supported Kennedy's election campaign, because "he was convinced Kennedy would become an outstanding President who would lead America toward a more mature handling of world events"⁶⁸. Right at the beginning of his incumbency, the invasion of Cuba failed (Bay of Pigs), against which Fulbright had urgently advised. Since he was "the only one who can say I told you so"⁶⁹, Fulbright had acquired Kennedy's respect, which he utilized to urge Kennedy to reconsider American policy in South East Asia, especially in Vietnam. Fulbright pointed out the failure of France in its fight against the Vietminh guerrillas and in 1961 already affirmed his doubt in the sense of the presence of a small group of advisors in South Vietnam. Since that time, Vietnam or the role, the United States played in this country, was one of Senator Fulbright's central topics. After the unfortunate start with the Bay of Pigs incident, the Kennedy government tried to reduce international tension, which it did rather successfully. These efforts expressed themselves in the Non Proliferation Treaty, which banned nuclear tests in the atmosphere and was signed in August 1963. It was also the merit of Fulbright's intensive efforts that the Senate ratified this contract on September 24, 1963. Fulbright appreciated the significance and importance of this contract as one of the most significant foreign policy performances of the Ken-

neddy administration. Straight out as the beginning of a foreign policy "which can accurately - though perhaps not prudently - be defined as one of 'peaceful consistence'"⁷⁰. Fulbright kept himself informed about the situation in Vietnam, e.g., by asking the Minister of Defense McNamara and General Maxwell D. Taylor, who had just returned from Vietnam how they assessed the situation. Even after Kennedy's assassination and the assumption of the presidency by Lyndon Johnson, Fulbright mostly busied himself with Vietnam topics in the inner circle of important foreign affairs politicians. This changed in August 1964, when: "Fulbright became an outright dissenter only after prolonged soul-searching and a long series of events which, piece by piece, chipped away at his natural inclination to work from within, rather than noisily and ineffectively from without"⁷¹.

The events at the Bay of Tonkin (which have been described in detail earlier in this text) gave rise to Fulbright's changed attitude. These events finally led to a breach between Fulbright and Lyndon Johnson, his political companion of many years. Fulbright felt betrayed by Johnson. He had wanted to support Johnson's election campaign unconditionally because he absolutely wanted to avoid Barry Goldwater becoming a candidate for the presidency. "He was so opposed to Goldwater, so certain Goldwater was rash and improvident, that he could not believe Johnson capable of aggressive military actions"⁷². Therefore, Fulbright lacked the critical distance when he supported the idea of pushing the Bay of Tonkin resolution through the Senate as soon as possible and providing Johnson with enormous approval. At first, Fulbright believed Johnson (or wanted to), who declared to the public that he wasn't interested in an escalation of the Vietnam war. However, in private circles with his closest advisors, he considered intensifying military pressure on Vietnam in order to achieve prompt results. Fulbright regretted very soon that he had enforced the resolution and therewith offered Johnson a more or less unlimited potential in the war against North Vietnam. Since he was given some hints that the events in the Bay of Tonkin

68. Cf. *ibid.*, 178.

69. Cf. *ibid.*, 178.

70. Cf. Fulbright, J. W., *Old Myths and New Realities and other Commentaries*. London. 1964, 5.

71. Cf. Johnson, Haynes; Gwertzman, Bernard M., *Fulbright...*, op. cit., 193.

72. Cf. *ibid.*, 198.

could not have been enacted as officially depicted, he had his staff scrutinize the actual situation in 1967. This research was also carried out at the ministry of defence. Fulbright's interest in Vietnam and the Vietnam war as a central topic developed step by step. Under the Kennedy government, John Newhouse, the Southeast Asia expert of the SFRC, still had some difficulties in focusing Fulbright's attention on Vietnam, since at this time Fulbright was more interested in Europe, the development aid or the exchange program. In May 1964, however, Fulbright had - i.e., before the Bay of Tonkin resolution - complained to the Minister of Defense, McNamara, about certain evidence of torture methods used against the Vietcong. In December 1964, Fulbright started to publicize his increasing concern about the Vietnam war: "Stepping up the war in Vietnam would be 'senseless', Fulbright told students at Southern Methodist University in December 1964, and declared America's involvement to have been a mistake in the first place"⁷³. The press, however, did not pay much attention to this speech.

This changed after Fulbright had traveled to Asia and informed himself about the cultural and historical development of China and Vietnam. On this occasion he read the appropriate literature and talked intensively to the well-informed senator Hiram Fong from Hawaii. This convinced Fulbright "that it was attempting to 'save' a culture that it did not understand, and that, in fact, in its obsession with the cold war, America had interjected itself into a conflict whose roots were largely indigenous"⁷⁴.

In 1965, Fulbright risked a breach with Lyndon Johnson, which he had put off for a long time. In 1966, he started the big Senate hearings, which made him well-known. The information which Fulbright collected confirmed his ideas of early 1966 that the Vietnam issue was an internal Vietnamese conflict in two regards: "On one level the struggle was between the people of North Vietnam and the inhabitants of South Vietnam. On another it was a battle within South Vietnam between the forces of democracy and pluralism on the one hand

and the 'Saigonese' ..., the corrupt and dictatorial MRC and their hangers-on - on the other"⁷⁵. Moreover, Fulbright understood that the Vietnamese who opposed the Saigon regime did so on behalf of nationalism, while the regime supported by the Americans was identified with colonialism. This conviction and thus also the efforts for a more common kind of procedure consolidated themselves also in the different currents of the American peace or antiwar movement, among which SANE was the closest to the establishment: "It saw itself as working within the establishment, particularly among liberal Democratic politicians, to convince them that negotiations should begin in Vietnam and to strengthen the hand of those who did adopt the 'dove' position"⁷⁶.

At the first Senate hearing in January 1966, the American Secretary of State felt put under pressure by the well-prepared chairman of the SFRC. Consequently, Rusk refused to provide the SFRC or Fulbright with further information in the future. Rusk didn't want to be caught with another lie. Fulbright and his team considered Rusk one of the mainsprings of the escalation in Vietnam.

Fulbright and his closest collaborator Marcy decided from now on to organize public Senate hearings. Their original plan was to mix government members and officials of the peace movement. The implementation of this idea failed because at times the Johnson government refused any kind of cooperation.

Fulbright was successful in mobilizing well-known and well-informed critics of the Vietnam war and ensuring that the general public paid attention. For example General James Gavin and George Kennan, the former US ambassador in Moscow and Beograd gave their statements. Both of them urgently advised terminating the Vietnam war as soon as possible, as far as this could be realized without harming the prestige of the United States and the stability in the region, in order to avoid the risk of a war with China. Johnson was increasingly concerned about the public attention the hearings were

73. Cf. Woods, Randall Bennett, *Fulbright...*, op. cit., 362.

74. Cf. *ibid.*, 392.

75. Cf. *ibid.*, 394.

76. Cf. Katz, Milton S., "Peace Liberals and Vietnam: SANE and the Politics of 'Responsible' Protest". *Peace and Change*, IX-2/3 (1983), 21-39, 23.

gaining. He even organized a conference in Honolulu where the South Vietnamese General Ky read a speech prepared by the American ambassador to distract from the hearings. Finally, advisors he had confidence in succeeded in persuading Johnson to admit the participation of General Taylor and Dean Rusk in the hearings. Fulbright had changed his tactics. He no longer treated them with particular friendliness, but exposed them to a cross-examination in which neither Taylor nor Rusk were particularly convincing. Johnson was concerned enough to bring Edgar Hoover to order the FBI to find out whether Fulbright and the other Senators on the Foreign Relations Committee had obtained information from “communists” since there seemed to be parallels between the presentations on the hearings and official publications by communist parties or leaders. Johnson and Hoover might rather have privately hoped to pin financial irregularities or love affairs on Fulbright and other “doves”. The latter was not successful, but in the atmosphere which ruled in the United States it was relatively easy to accuse Fulbright of having sympathy for communism because he and his staff had many contacts with the embassies of several communist countries. On several occasions, Fulbright appealed for a sober and sensible attitude towards communism and communist countries. He considered nationalism - which he believed to also be true of Vietnam - to be much stronger than communism: “Twentieth-century nationalism has proven to be a far more powerful force than classical Communist doctrine foresaw, and, indeed, a far more powerful revolutionary force than Communism itself”⁷⁷.

In 1966, Fulbright did not advocate an unconditional end to the war, but termination of the bombardment of North Vietnam and the withdrawal of American troops - with the exception of some enclaves around the big South Vietnamese towns - and the revival of the Geneva conventions up to free elections in Vietnam. The Johnson government was very eager to avoid the latter, because they were afraid that Ho Chi Minh could win the elections and that the whole of Vietnam would become communist. Fulbright did not consider these ideas the decay of the free world. He did not believe that the small communist countries were particularly

menacing for the United States and its allies.

The hearings initiated by Fulbright before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had a considerable influence on the educated middle class. This applied also to rather conservative opponents of the Vietnam war, to whom Fulbright felt more bound than to the political left wing. In general, Fulbright’s activities clearly strengthened the peace movement and encouraged it to undertake own comparative actions. Hearings were arranged at the universities which had Vietnam as a central topic. In parallel to a series of SFRC hearings which dealt with China, there were similar events at several universities. The more the Vietnam war progressed, the more “Fulbright came to the conclusion that the key to peace in Southeast Asia was Communist China. He did so not because he mistakenly assumed that Ho Chi Minh and the NLF were puppets of Beijing rather, he recognized that the Soviet Union wanted peace in the region and favored a negotiated settlement, but that its rivalry with China paralyzed it and allowed Hanoi to play one communist superpower off against the other”⁷⁸. Fulbright had - as always - put forth renowned experts, in this case sinologists and foreign policy experts, with the target of encouraging China experts in the foreign ministry and educating the population. All experts recommended a differentiated view of China and the intensification of relations between China and the United States.

Fulbright was able to strengthen the peace movement (which was not his declared target) and convince the educated population of his ideas, but neither the government nor the American people. Most probably, his cool assessment of the communist powers probably came much too early for that time. Therefore, he was always accused of being a communist spy. He was even the target of an assassination plot which was only uncovered at the last minute. Fulbright considered the “communist phobia” to be the central problem of American foreign policy. This phobia was based on the Domino theory from the Eisenhower era, which contributed to the expansion of the war to Laos and Cambodia. Therefore, the central difference between Fulbright and the Johnson administration was that the latter

77. Cf. Fulbright, J.W., *Prospects for the West*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1963, 16.

78. Cf. Woods, Randall Bennett, *Fulbright...*, op. cit., 412.

refused to include the NLF in a South Vietnamese coalition government and insisted on the capitulation of North Vietnam. In Fulbright's opinion, both aspects were wrong. He regretted very much that the political "dissent" almost broke the friendship between him and Johnson, also a Southerner, a comradeship which had already lasted for decades. From 1966, they both tried to communicate in a more conciliated way.

But this changed nothing with regard to their political attitudes. The propaganda, which was increasingly stepped up by the White House accused Fulbright and other "doves" of being cowards. Moreover, lies and deception were par for the course, i.e., an inappropriately positive picture of the situation in Vietnam was painted by denying the involvement of neutral Thailand, despite the fact that there was already a huge B 52 base and - as Fulbright pointed out - another was under construction in a port in Thailand.

This deception of the general public could not be continued for very long. From early 1967, there was an increasing number of American wounded and dead. Reports about atrocities carried out by American soldiers became public. Pictures were broadcasted via television showing crying Vietnamese children which were burned by Napalm. Fulbright's office drowned in such reports. Fulbright himself read many of these and was very affected. Finally these reports caused him to reject the war, not only for politically determined reasons, but also from a moral point of view. He began to deal with moral and theological-spiritual questions and in this connection with the life of Mahatma Gandhi. This perspective, which had now also a moral aspect, brought Fulbright nearer to the part of the antiwar movement which had developed from the civil rights movement, e.g., Martin Luther King.

The government itself uttered reservations against a continuous escalation of the war. The Minister of Defense McNamara and Secretary of State Rusk tried hard to get a billion-dollar amount for the war from the Senate committee (which the Senate had drastically cut), but McNamara no longer agreed to an expansion and intensification of the war. He resigned from office and became President of the

World Bank in 1968.

Temporarily, the Tet offensive brought the falcons back on the plan, who explained to the general public that one had to support the government in such a problematic situation and should not publicly criticize it, as Fulbright did. At the same time, Fulbright had started his hearings on the Bay of Tonkin events with the aim of canceling the resolution. This happened some time later. Fulbright was re-elected despite these massive problems. Obviously, his electors appreciated him as a man who courageously stood up for his opinion in public. When the peace talks between North Vietnam and the United States started in Paris in 1968, Fulbright was relatively surprised. He himself and parts of the peace movement had certain doubts in the Johnson administration's willingness to achieve peace. They appreciated, however, the beginning of the discussions. This skepticism was even more appropriate under Johnson's successor, President Nixon. In the capacity of chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Fulbright urged Nixon in the first half of his incumbency to terminate the Vietnam war. "Just give us a year", Fulbright remembered them (Nixon and Kissinger) saying⁷⁹. Fulbright had never had any illusions about Nixon and the style of his people. He was, however, disappointed about the hustle on the one hand and the secrecy on the other with which the war was intensified just a short time after Nixon's assumption of office and - above all - that it was extended to Cambodia. Also the wording that an 'honorable' peace would have to be negotiated, made Fulbright suspicious about the willingness of the Nixon government to terminate the war very soon. In contrary to Nixon, Fulbright was quite aware that "Ho Chi Minh and the soldier-citizens around him were willing to sacrifice everything to reunify the country under their leadership. They were not subjects to threats"⁸⁰.

In parallel to the growing frustration of Fulbright and the whole Foreign Relations Committee, the peace movement, which had been exhausted and split, had recovered so much that it was able to gather the war opponents from the different directions and plan major protest activities. At this point in time, Fulbright and the antiwar movement were so much connected with each other that Fulbright was

79. Cf. *ibid.*, 504.

80. Cf. *ibid.*, 528.

able to follow the proposal of the vehement war opponent Reverend Mouzon Mann from Arkansas, who suggested urging Nixon to send an official delegation to Ho Chi Minh's funeral in order to improve the climate for the peace negotiations. Fulbright was then roughly accused, e.g., of being a betrayer, not only of the man on the street, but also of the government members, e.g., of vice President Spiro Agnew. At the same time, the peace movement considered Fulbright an important supporter – with the exception of the radical wing. Fulbright identified himself more strongly with it: “Fulbright sympathized with those who sacrificed their citizenship for their principles”⁸¹. This was largely in line with his own attitude towards life. But participation in the demonstrations was also a contradiction to his rather conservative attitude, and he never did participate. Fulbright received an increasing number of letters from men liable for military service and who asked him for advice because they planned to burn their summons and/or to escape to Canada. In his carefully considered reply he explained that he considered the Vietnam war in general a bad thing, but he advised them to fulfill their compulsory military service. Fulbright could not / did not want to confess openly to civil disobedience. At the same time he knew that the secret war in Laos was escalating and claimed many lives. In addition, a Senate delegation had found out in a difficult exploration journey that the situation of the American troops in Vietnam and the adjacent countries was desolate in many regards.

When he balloted against the appointment of G. Harold Carswell as one of the top judges - a racist and juristically extremely poorly qualified judge who was put forth by the Nixon administration - Fulbright for the first time did not vote with the democratic Southerner block in the Senate. This vote brought Fulbright closer to the civil rights wing of the antiwar movement. It was also considered a ‘cleansing’ from the earlier, seemingly ‘racist’ votes of Fulbright.

One of the last massive climaxes of all aspects of the Vietnam war happened in connection with the invasion of South Vietnamese and US American troops into neutral Cambodia in April 1970. As already mentioned before, this event was preceded by the downfall of Prince Sihanouk, who was at

the time traveling across Europe, and the takeover of the government by Lon Nol, who was supported by strictly anti-communist troop commanders. As very often before, Nixon had lied to the American population and the SFRC. The invasion was kept secret from the general public and Nixon's Secretary of State Rogers assured in a non-public meeting of the SFRC, “that the administration was committed to maintaining the neutrality of Cambodia, and under no circumstances would American forces cross the border”⁸². Fulbright and his staff had anticipated the invasion of Cambodia (because Washington was full of rumors to this effect), but they were not able to supply enough evidence because the reconnaissance staff of the SFRC could not be in Cambodia early enough. Fulbright and some other Senators expressly criticized Nixon and doubted that the constitution had assured him the right to let troops invade neutral Cambodia. Moreover, this kind of war expansion was linked to personal problems of Nixon, who was afraid of humiliation and failure and who probably still believed in victory. An impeachment was discussed for the first time. There were massive and partly violent demonstrations by the different currents of the antiwar movement against the expansion of the war. Nixon was extremely disparaging about the demonstrating students. This may have encouraged the Governor of Ohio to call the National Guard and let them shoot at peacefully demonstrating students. Four students died, eleven were wounded. This escalation of the war at home caused country-wide protests. Even at the university of Fayetteville – Fulbright's home university - a paper was circulating which demanded an impeachment. In addition, a commemoration service was arranged. Fulbright appreciated these big demonstrations, which reached far into May 1970, because he considered them the return to the values of liberal “internationalism” and finally believed that democracy would be strengthened - even if this ran absolutely contrary to White House opinion, where increasing paranoia started to develop.

Even during the lifetime of Ho Chi Minh, Fulbright had lent his support to the American prisoners who were captured in North Vietnam. He had requested Ho Chi Minh and his successor Pham Van Dong to publish a list of arrested Americans and to release

81. Cf. *ibid.*, 594.

82. Cf. *ibid.*, 563.

the ill and the wounded. For this reason women of captured and missing soldiers requested Fulbright to lend support to their husbands from fall 1970. The women, who actually came from the “Falcon families” pressed for a prompt termination of the war, hoping that they could see their husbands again. Fulbright assured that he would keep on intervening in Hanoi and would try to arrange for the war prisoner question to be handled as a humanitarian matter, irrespective of all political and military problems. While Fulbright undertook these efforts - which certainly promised to be successful - the Nixon government launched a spectacular, but absolutely unsuccessful operation whereby special troops were flown by helicopter to a prison near Hanoi in order to liberate American prisoners. The troops found an empty prison. Fulbright considered the whole affair a media spectacle right from the beginning, but did not have any hard evidence.

Until the end of the war, Fulbright generally treated the Nixon government relatively mildly, but he consistently and unflinchingly supported an early end to the Vietnam war. There would certainly have been reasons and possibilities to attack Nixon and his supporters much more vigorously. Fulbright’s relative restraint was not due to Nixon, but to Kissinger, who gradually tried to act according to his own ideas in the White House. To Fulbright, Kissinger shared the same mindset as himself; he - like Fulbright himself - assessed communism and the communist nations with a realistic-sober approach and strove in the long term to change American foreign policy. Fulbright’s partly reserved reaction towards the end of the Vietnam war could have been due to his exhaustion after a struggle which had gone on for many years.

The Senate’s reaction to the “Christmas bombing” was the proposal to pass a law in early January 1973 which would withdraw from the government all financial support for continuation of their warfare. But when the war-faring countries returned to the Paris negotiation table in early January, Fulbright wanted to provide them with the opportunity to reach a result. On January 20, 1973, at last, a ceasefire agreement terminated the Vietnam war

officially. Fulbright congratulated Nixon (“It’s later than I hoped, but it’s good”⁸³). He was not as euphoric as many of his colleagues and regretted very much that Lyndon Johnson died just before the end of the war, which was in fact also the end of Fulbright’s political career.

3. SUMMARIZING CONCLUSION

The general public tried to forget the Vietnam war, which decisively influenced both Fulbright’s life and the life of the American nation, as soon as possible. Academics, however, are still very preoccupied with the debate about this war. To a certain extent, they pose the same questions which Fulbright vigorously examined: “The issues on which writers are now divided are essentially those that Americans debated during the war. A fundamental concern remains the nature of the war itself”⁸⁴. But one could almost get the impression that Fulbright’s tireless efforts to educate the Americans had hardly left a mark. The highly-educated, cosmopolitan jurist and historian Fulbright considered himself a teacher who wanted to move the Americans away from their “communist phobia” and to “bring reason and clarity into the nation’s foreign policy”⁸⁵. Whether he was successful is still a question. Certainly his speeches, papers, lectures, Congress and Senate hearings pioneered the changed attitude to the communist countries. This political attitude, even before he started his political career, was more or less in line with the “internationalist” wing of the peace movement. It cannot, however, be said that Fulbright had ever been a member of a movement. Nonetheless he became very important for the peace movement because he was instrumental in getting the nuclear test ban off the ground. He played an essential role in the antiwar movement because, having been the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee for many years, he had power and influence and certainly had the highest rank among those American politicians who had considered the Vietnam war an error right from its beginning and who consistently argued for its termination. Of course, a certain lust for dispute and an understanding for other cultures played a role here. This understanding of other

83. Cf. *ibid.*, 627.

84. Cf. Herring, George C., “Review Article - America and Vietnam: The Debate Continues”. *American Historical Review*, 92 (1987), 350-362, 351.

85. Cf. Brown, Eugene, *J. William Fulbright - Advice and Dissent*. Iowa City, University of Iowa Press, 1985, 5.

cultures was influenced by his Oxford years, his contacts there, his journeys to Europe, but also by his roots in the American South. On the other hand, however, this involved him in the Senate's conservative Southerner block and caused him to distance himself from the "civil rights wing" of the antiwar movement. Generally, Fulbright had - most probably because of his own life, which had always been a privileged one - little understanding of social problems. This partly changed due to a closer bond with the antiwar movement, which made him concern himself to a greater degree with moral issues. Moreover he was also directly confronted with misery, e.g., through the reports about torture

in Vietnam, through his dealings with the wives of the soldiers, his efforts to have the prisoners of war released, etc. This bond never induced Fulbright to take part in demonstrations. He was too conservative, which was reflected in his whole attitude toward life, even if he will go down in history as the one significant opponent of several American Presidents and an emphatic critic of their foreign policy: "There must be something more substantial for a nation to seek, something more durable and rewarding than the primacy of its power. The alternative that seems so obvious, so desirable and yet so elusive is the pursuit of public happiness"⁸⁶.

86. Cf. Fulbright, William J., *The Crippled Giant - American Foreign Policy and its Domestic Consequences*. New York, 1972, 267.