

Disturbing Silence: How the Student Movement Shaped Nixon's Presidency and
the Policies of America

By

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Abstract:

President Richard M. Nixon's fear and hatred of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) resulted in the SDS having an undue influence on his foreign policies. The SDS was a small faction of the larger Anti-Vietnam War movement. Despite that, by 1969, Nixon's fixation on the movement affected Nixon's policies surrounding the secret negotiations between National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger and the North Vietnamese. Nixon felt it necessary to maintain the perception of an American united front to the Vietnamese. Accordingly, Nixon felt it was imperative to silence the very vocal and visible SDS by any means necessary. His fear of the group led to changes in his domestic policies including the escalation of harsh FBI surveillance on American citizens and an adjusted draft lottery. This same fear translated in foreign policy shifts including his new policy of Détente. It was indeed the President's fear of a small social movement which changed major governmental actions and goals.

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Term Key

BPP – Black Panther Party

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency

COINTELPRO – Counterintelligence Program

DRV – Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam)

FBI – Federal Bureau of Investigation

FRUS – Foreign Relations of the United States

FOIA – Freedom of Information Act

Hawk (hawkish) – prone to military or aggressive foreign policy

Hippies – Counterculture youth (Not the same as the Student Movement)

IRS - Internal Revenue Service

LBJ – President Lyndon B. Johnson

LID – League for Industrial Democracy

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NSA – National Security Agency

PLP – Progressive Labour Faction

Politoburo – DRV leading political party

RYM – Revolutionary Youth Movement

SDS – Students for a Democratic Society

SSOC – Southern Students Organizing Committee

USSR – Soviet Union

Viet Cong – Fighters allied with North Vietnam

Weathermen – Breakaway faction of the SDS (Also called the Weather Underground)

WSA – Worker Student Alliance

*Democracy is not a state. It is an act, and each generation must do its part.*¹

Congressman John Lewis passed away on July 17, 2020. A pioneer in the Civil Rights movement, he was the last surviving member of the Big Six civil rights leaders who organized the March on Washington, the others being; Martin Luther King Jr., James Farmer, A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, and Whitney Young. Using the power of social movements, through protest and civil disobedience, Lewis sought to change American policy, influencing generations. On the day of his funeral, the New York Times published his final essay, written just before his death, “Together, You Can Redeem the Soul of Our Nation”. In it, Lewis chided Americans’ inaction, saying: “Democracy is not a state. It is an act, and each generation must do its part.” These words remind us all starkly of the historical need for social movements and their continued importance.

The effects of social movements are not immediate, and their effects may be subtle at any one time. However, they have had a profound effect on governmental decisions. One such movement often understated and misunderstood is the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and its allies, who had a significant influence on President Richard Nixon during the Vietnam War. The SDS and others protested the imperialistic nature of the American government, and the neglect towards vulnerable members of society by political leaders.² Their goal was to change American policies towards foreign affairs and domestic struggles regarding race, poverty, and inequality.³ When Nixon came to power in 1969, the SDS was well-established, protesting

¹ Lewis, John. “Together, You Can Redeem the Soul of Our Nation.” *New York Times*, July 30, 2020.

² *Students for a Democratic Society (U.S.)(Hereafter SDS). The Port Huron Statement (1962). Chicago, Ill. :C.H. Kerr, 1990.*

³ Ibid.

vigorously against the ongoing Vietnam War President Nixon inherited. However, a mere four years later, towards end of Nixon's first term, the SDS was dissolved, some members dead or seriously injured and many of its leaders imprisoned. Some have suggested that the SDS failed and their role was insignificant in the wider context of the Vietnam War. However, Nixon's efforts to terminate SDS clearly shows they impacted government. Specifically, Nixon's wanted to present a united American front during the secret negotiations between then National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger and North Vietnamese Politburo member Le Duc Tho. These negotiations were intended to allow Nixon to end the Vietnam War, while cementing his legacy as a successful foreign diplomat. To achieve this, Nixon felt it necessary to eliminate the perceived threat of the SDS, a goal which would alter both his domestic and foreign policy, especially Nixon's policy towards the Vietnam War.

The historiographies of the SDS, social movements, and Nixon's Vietnam War policy are complex and often independent of one other. The historiography of the SDS began with Kirkpatrick Sale in 1973, just two years after the 'official' fall of the organization. Sale focused on the structure and actions of the SDS, including their interactions with local and state police. Sale utilized firsthand accounts from the SDS leadership, including founder Tom Hayden.⁴ After Sale came numerous other historians who understood the SDS as a small, not inconsequential, social movement, yet one with little noticeable impact.⁵ The other side of this historiography is

⁴ Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS; The rise and development of the Students for a Democratic Society, the organization that became the major expression of the American left in the sixties- its passage from student protest to institutional resistance to revolutionary activism, and its ultimate impact on American politics and life* (New York; Random House, 1973).

⁵ These include; Mark Hamilton Lytle, *America's Uncivil Wars; the Sixties Era from Elvis to the Fall of Richard Nixon*, (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2006), Sean D. Stryker, "Knowledge and Power in the Students for a Democratic Society, 1960-1970." *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 38 (1993): 89-138. Accessed September 10, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41035467>., Harvey Pekar, and Gary Dumm, *Students for a democratic society: A graphic history*. (New York; Macmillan, 2009), Harvey M. Teres, *Renewing the Left: Politics, Imagination, and the New York Intellectuals*. (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1996).

the effects of social movements on American policy. While this is a far more studied field, it tends to focus of the effects of movements such as the Civil Rights movement and far right movements on domestic policy.⁶ The third historiography is where my work finds itself is the most unusual, and innovative argument, this is the historiography of Nixon's motivation in the Vietnam War.

Most historical analyses examine Nixon's Vietnam War policy from a top-down political perspective. Jeffery Kimball, for instance, has argued that the policies implemented by the Nixon administration were largely understood as standalone decisions independent of social and cultural domestic movements. These understandings of Nixon's motivations came from the sources utilized by early historians in this field such as Jeffery Kimball, who noted in his book *Nixon's Vietnam War* that Nixon and Kissinger's objective was never a stable and independent Vietnam.⁷ Instead, Kimball suggested that they knew the war was lost and as a result their goal was to have a "decent interval" between when they signed the Paris Peace Accord and the inevitable overtaking of South Vietnam by North Vietnam. According to Kimball, retaining American credibility on the global stage was the most important objective to Nixon in the ongoing conflict in Vietnam. Kimball argued that Nixon's objective of retaining American credibility was driven by the fear that the war was "draining American military power".

Additionally, Kimball argues that the diminishing global confidence in American prowess was at

⁶ Some of these historians are, Janice M. Irvine, *Talk About Sex: The Battles over Sex Education in the United States*. (Berkeley C.A., University of California Press, 2002)., Rick Perlstein, *The Invisible Bridge: The Fall of Nixon and The Rise of Reagan*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014). Nancy Isenberg, *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2017). Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America*, (Cambridge M.A.; Harvard University Press, 2018)., Aldon D. Morris, *The origins of the civil rights movement*. (New York; Simon and Schuster, 1986), J.M. Bloom, *Class, race, and the civil rights movement*. (Bloomington, IN; Indiana University Press, 2019), Kenneth T. Andrews, "Social movements and policy implementation: The Mississippi civil rights movement and the war on poverty, 1965 to 1971." *American Sociological Review* (2001): 71-95.

⁷ Jeffery Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War*, (Lawrence KS: University Press of Kansas, 1998) Pg. 52.

the forefront of Nixon's mind. Kimball's argument regarding Nixon's motivation was strongly influenced by the sources he had access to, which were a limited number of National Security Council files.⁸

Moving away from the arguments out forward by Kimball, with access to a larger document cache, other historians began to provide a more intensive look at Nixon's decisions during the Vietnam War. One such historian was Larry Berman in his book *No Peace, No Honor*.⁹ According to Berman, Nixon's goal in Vietnam was to continue the war beyond the end of his administration, so that he would not be the one held responsible for the inevitable fall of South Vietnam. This would ensure that his legacy as a master strategist would be preserved. Berman concluded that given American weariness with the war and South Vietnamese weakness, Nixon had completely written off any chance of victory. According to Berman, this recognition operated against Nixon's own claim that he was trying to achieve "peace with honor". Instead, Berman claims Nixon wanted to create plausible deniability for himself by preventing the failure of Vietnam from being attributed to him. Berman came to this conclusion using an expanded release of foreign relation documents and the declassification of some CIA files.

The study of Nixon's Vietnam was further advanced by the work of David Schmitz. In *Richard Nixon and the Vietnam War*, Schmitz proposed a more nuanced view of Nixon's policy, that evolved throughout the progression of Nixon's tenure. Schmitz claimed that at the beginning of his presidency Nixon truly believed that a military victory was achievable, and thus it became the central focal point of his policy. Schmitz argues that this military tactic did not last long, and quickly Nixon turned his attention to preserving his legacy and reputation as a powerful

⁸*Ibid.* Pg. 55, These files were heavily redacted and limited in time frame

⁹ Larry Berman, *No Peace, No Honor*, (New York; The Free Press, 2001). Pg. 9.

statesman.¹⁰ According to Schmitz, the failure of Nixon's military objectives caused the President to re-evaluate and change his objective to a "drawn-out American retreat to mask defeat."¹¹ Schmitz's argument was informed by his use of the newly declassified excerpts of the *Nixon Tapes*, a series of recordings by Richard Nixon in the Oval Office, which became public knowledge during the Watergate scandal, yet are not yet fully declassified. While Schmitz did make a passing nod to Nixon's desire to be well thought of by the public, he still did not draw a distinct connection between the widespread social movements domestically and Nixon's Vietnam policy. The connection between Nixon's foreign policy and image conservation I argue can be understood as a result of the student movements.

Unlike Kimball, Berman and Schmitz, I propose that Nixon's Vietnam War policies during the first term of his presidency were strongly influenced by the student movement and its allies. Where previous historians simply say that it was Nixon's desire for re-election and domestic support that drove his policy, I argue that in the name of these goals Nixon targeted the student movement and adjusted his policies to inhibit and silence the movements.¹² Nixon believed that the Student Movement was responsible for influencing and increasing anti-war sentiment amongst moderates. This belief in addition to the vocal nature of the movement and the media attention brought to it, influenced the negotiations between Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and North Vietnamese council man Le Duc Tho. Nixon's policies were driven by the desire to silence and disrupt the SDS, allowing for the presentation of a united American position

¹⁰ David F. Schmitz, *Richard Nixon and the Vietnam War: The End of the American Century*, (New York; Rowman and Littlefield, 2014). Pg. 23.

¹¹ *Ibid.* Pg. 53.

¹² Kimball, *Nixon's*, Pg. 52, Berman, *No Peace*, Pg. 9.

during the negotiations. The student movements effect in this regard was largely dismissed, yet its mere existence changed the course of Nixon's presidency.

This argument is best understood through a chronological analysis, beginning with Nixon's tenure as Vice-President of the United States under President Dwight Eisenhower. It was during his vice-presidency where Nixon first came into contact with student movements in South America, and interaction which would shape his reaction to the SDS in the 1960's in America. Next, it is important to look at the formation of the SDS as an organization in Michigan during the summer of 1960. The formation of the SDS led to a backlash from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), under the banner of the Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) to prevent the spread of communism and preserve national security. It was then important to delve into the inherited Vietnam War, and understand the situation which Nixon found himself in 1969. From there an analysis of Nixon's policies throughout his first term ending in 1971 with the fall of the SDS.

I use a variety of sources, from government documents, to newspapers and media, to music. One of the most vital sources used to understand the connection between Nixon's policy and the SDS is the FBI documents regarding COINTELPRO. These documents, crated by the FBI Freedom of Information (FOIA) library Vault, contained all the documents regarding the operations conducted against social movements, political figures, and their allies during COINTELPRO.¹³ These documents, while still redacted, at times heavily, were released to the public after in 1975, after the Church Committee found the program to be unlawful. In these documents a narrative emerged as to the fear held by the government against the SDS. This fear manifested as dramatic, creative, and illegal operations against the SDS with the goal of

¹³ FBI. "The Vault." FBI. FBI, January 18, 2011. <http://vault.fbi.gov/>.

dismantling and discrediting the organization. These documents only provide a portion of the larger narrative, the direct interactions between the Nixon administration and the SDS. To understand how Nixon's policy changed, one must look at his policy. One key policy which Nixon undertook during this time was his idea of Détente or easing of hostility.¹⁴ In pursuit of this Nixon and Henry Kissinger conducted secret meetings with North Vietnam. These meetings were recorded and preserved and in 2018, they were released by the American Office of the Historian in the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) documents.¹⁵ These documents not only look at the outcomes of the meetings, but document everything, including the social banter conducted between these two parties. It is in these innocuous moments where the effects of the domestic American civil unrest caused by the SDS become evident. To further understand Nixon's policy, I also included the Nixon tapes recorded in the Oval Office, Nixon and Kissinger's personal memoirs, and press releases made by the president.¹⁶

Finally, I look at public perception of the SDS. I begin by examining the SDS manifesto, the Port Huron Statement, which explained the organization's goals and motivation to the American public. I also use Gallup polls, which provided a general perception of public support of the president from 1969-1971. Finally, and most importantly, I examine the media. This included newspapers, magazines, and television. This time period saw a rise in the hero reporter, with reporters such as I.F. Stone, Jack Anderson, Seymour Hersh, and Hunter S. Thompson in print media, and Walter Cronkite in television. With these sources a clearer picture emerged as to the tensions of the time and the effects these tensions had on the president. Utilizing these

¹⁴ Gary Hess, *Vietnam: Explaining America's Lost War* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015) Pg. 133.

¹⁵ Unknown, "Memorandum of Conversation in Paris, August 4, 1969," Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter FRUS) 1969-1976, Volume XLII, Vietnam: The Kissinger-Le Duc Tho Negotiations. Document 1. Pg. 2.

¹⁶ Daniel Ellsberg, *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2003) Pg. 426.

sources, and other, allowed for the definitive claim that the SDS and student movements changed President Nixon's policies from 1969-1971.

Chapter One – The Origin Story

The tumultuous relationship between Richard Nixon, the SDS, and the Vietnam War did not occur arbitrarily. The relationship was dictated by prior events and ideas, from various sources. To understand how and why the events of Nixon's first term occurred, one first must understand the events that led to Nixon's inauguration in 1969. These events included Nixon's political career as Vice-President, the formation of the SDS in 1960, the formation of COINTELPRO, Nixon's election, and finally how America found itself in a war in Vietnam. These events led to the difficult yet influential relationship between the SDS and Richard Nixon, especially in regard to Nixon's Vietnam War policy.

Nixon as Vice-President

Nixon's fear and dislike of the student left began long before his presidency. Throughout Nixon's political career he would regularly clash with those seen to be on the left side of the political spectrum. As Eisenhower's Vice-President, Nixon expanded his role from sidelined supporter to powerful advisor, especially in foreign affairs. This expansion of the role led Nixon to be dubbed the "first modern vice-president".¹ Part of the expanded responsibilities undertaken by VP Nixon were attending Cabinet and National Security meetings, and becoming the American representative on several foreign trips including to Saigon and Hanoi in French Indochina (before its independence and name change to Vietnam). In fact, on September 24, 1955, Eisenhower suffer a heart attack which prevented him from performing his duties as President for six weeks, so Nixon stepped in. At the time, the 25th Amendment to the United States Constitution had not been ratified, meaning that the Vice President had no official power

¹ Melvin Small, *A Companion to Richard M. Nixon*. (Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) Pg. 102-120.

should something happen to the President. This meant that Nixon's actions in stepping into an interim presidential position had been unprecedented, and showcased the potential for the role of Vice-President. These increased responsibilities gave Nixon the opportunity to actively change American policy and express his own views on the global stage.

Nixon's position on foreign policy while he was Vice-President was 'hawkish'. This is to say that he advocated aggressive policies, as well as being vocally critical of foreign governments. This was particularly noticeable in his attitude towards Communist countries, namely in South America and the USSR. In 1958 Nixon embarked on a "goodwill tour" of South America. Prior to the trip Nixon had vocally supported former Venezuelan dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez. Nixon believed that Pérez Jiménez stood up against communism and was a strong leader. When Pérez Jiménez fled Venezuela, the US accepted him in and additionally gave him a Legion of Merit award for exceptionally meritorious conduct.² The support of Pérez Jiménez did not endear Nixon to the people of South America. His actions were viewed as another example of American Imperialism and an attempt to exert control over South American countries.³ During his tour these feelings boiled over.

The first stop on Nixon's goodwill tour was to Uruguay. While there, Nixon made an unscheduled stop to the Universidad de la República, to speak with the students there about American foreign policy. While some of the exchanges were tinged with animosity, for the most part this was a peaceful event. As the discussions with students in Uruguay went so well, Nixon chose to do the same at his next destination of Lima Peru. There he went to the National

² Unknown, "Progress Report by the Operations Coordinating Board to the National Security Council," Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter FRUS) 1952-1955, Volume IV, The American Republics, United States general policy with respect to Latin America. Document 13. Pg. 89-92.

³ Small, *A Companion*, Pg. 24.

University of San Marcos to once again explain his views on foreign policy. Upon arrival Nixon was immediately met by student protestors hurling insults and objects.⁴ Before Nixon could even enter the university building, he was forced back into his car by the secret service and driven away. The protestors followed Nixon back to his hotel, with reports saying they spat on him and his wife Pat.⁵ Despite the aggression which met him in Peru, Nixon chose to continue his tour. The next and final destination was Venezuela, the center of the controversy.

Immediately upon arrival in Caracas, Nixon and his wife were met by protestors who reportedly spat on them and approached them wielding metal pipes.⁶ One report for the *New York Herald* stated that the “Venezuelan troops and police seemed to evaporate. The vice-president and the whole official party literally had to fight their way to cars behind a thin but sturdy phalanx of U.S. Secret Service agents.”⁷ Once inside the motorcade, Nixon began to travel through Caracas, all the while his car was being attacked with rocks and fists. Eventually, the crowd began to rock Nixon’s car back and forth in an attempt to flip it, and other cars in the motorcade had their windows broken resulting in injuries to members of the party. Nixon ultimately arrived at the American Embassy, however the mob continued to protest outside its gates. Shortly after arriving, Nixon would flee Venezuela and return to Washington. In a report on the trip Nixon claimed that there was “absolute proof that [the protestors] were directed and controlled by a central Communist conspiracy.” This was later refuted by the Director of the CIA Allen Dulles.⁸ The events in South America would be some of Nixon’s first dealings with

⁴ *Ibid.* Pg. 25, These objects were anything the students could get their hands on and included rocks, sticks, and books.

⁵ Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nixon: The Education of a Politician 1913-1962*. (New York: Simon & Schuster. 1987) Pg. 465-469.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Earl Mazo, “Screeching Mob Hurls Rocks at Nixon”. *San Bernardino County Sun* (May 14, 1958). Pg. 1.

⁸ Stephen G. Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America: The Foreign Policy of Anticommunism* (Chapel Hill; University of North Carolina Press, 1988). Pg. 102.

student movements and would inevitably shape how he dealt with similar movements during his election campaign and presidency.

The Origins of the SDS

For Nixon, the SDS was a domestic version of the violent movements he experienced in South America, and therefore the root of evil. The emergency of the SDS came in 1960, when the established organization Student League for Industrial Democracy officially changed their name to the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). With this name change came a distancing from their liberal parent organization the League for Industrial Democracy (LID). The SDS was implemented to be more inclusive to ideas outside of the labour issues which were the focus of the LID. This distancing was larger than just the name change, as it also signified a shift to the “new left”, what the FBI saw as radical leftist. For the SDS, this name change meant that there was a separation between what they saw as a corruption of the “old left” by “Stalinism”, and the progressive stance of a “new left... committed to deliberativeness, honesty [and] reflection.”⁹ This shift was a move from the liberal stance of supporting the American federal government, which during the Cold War had a tendency to priorities foreign policy over domestic policy, to supporting a leftist system which included more social action and a push to improve domestic issue in the United States before looking abroad. This change to “new left” ideology would be what caused the most concern from the government and police, as it meant that the SDS was vocally opposing the central ideology of American policy, the destruction of communism globally.

⁹ *Students for a Democratic Society (U.S.)(Hereafter SDS). The Port Huron Statement (1962). Chicago, Ill. :C.H. Kerr, 1990.*

The SDS was officially founded on January 1, 1960 in Ann Arbor Michigan, with Alan Haber as president and Tom Hayden as a leading staff member.¹⁰ In June 1962, the SDS held a conference sponsored by the LID, however, due to the nature of the conference, specifically the criticisms of the “old Left” the sponsorship quickly fell away. The convention was held at a United Auto Workers Retreat in Port Huron Michigan. Students from across the United States, dominantly from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, came together to redesign the Student League for Industrial Democracy, and turn it into the Students for a Democratic Society. During this convention Tom Hayden and Alan Haber published and disseminated the official manifesto for the newly established SDS. This manifesto quickly became known as the Port Huron statement, named so after the location of the convention. The Statement was so controversial that it led to the disownment of the SDS by the LID. These controversial statements came dominantly came from the Statements refusal to denounce all communist ideals and supporters, as well as encouraging protest demonstrations and civil disobedience.

The Statement was predominantly a scathing critique of the American political system, with every aspect from, “political parties, big business, labour unions, the military industrial complex, the arms race, nuclear stockpiling, racial discrimination,” being thoroughly disavowed and questioned.¹¹ It began with a resigned take on generational inheritance, stating, “Every generation inherits from the past a set of problems.” The pitting of the youth against the older generation would within itself would position the SDS against the government, and eventually Nixon. A major criticism was that the older generation had plunged the world into conflict, specifically the Cold War, and “threatened civilization”.¹² In the statement, Hayden pointed out

¹⁰ In the early years (1960-1962) the SDS remained sponsored by the LID both monetarily and through mentorship.

¹¹ Sale, *SDS*, Pg. 50.

¹² SDS, *Statement*.

that democracy only works if every individual is given an equal voice, which was impossible due to lobbyists, and independent financial support for both major political parties. Hayden then used this as a call for civil disobedience and social protest as the way to ensure that the voices of the American people are heard over the desires of lobbyists or foreign agents.

During the 1960's the SDS was mainly concerned with the "overlooked" domestic issues. Hayden wrote, "With rockets we are emancipating man from terrestrial limitations, but from Mississippi jails still comes the prayers for emancipation of man on Earth." Despite the focus of the SDS on domestic issues, the Port Huron Statement still addressed the critique of American foreign policy. The elements of foreign policy of greatest concern to the SDS at this point (as the US would not be officially involved in Vietnam until the Gulf of Tonkin resolution two years later) was the all-encompassing Cold War. Specifically, the SDS argued for an end to the Cold War through "universal controlled disarmament", the downgrading of NATO, and the denuclearization of the Third World.¹³ This critique would be expanded in later years to include the Vietnam War as another example of American government overstep in pursuit of empire. While the Cold War appeared to be between two superpowers, the USA and the USSR, for ideological domination over the world, in picking sides smaller nations came into the cross hairs of the United States. For Hayden, the imperialist nature of the Vietnam War was not one of physical control over the nation, but rather an ideological control, building from the ideological battle of the Cold War.

Hayden's scathing account of the imperialistic political system which led to the Vietnam War was the first element of the Port Huron Statement to separate the SDS from the LID and mainstream Cold War politics, this was to say the need to suppress communism at any cost. The

¹³ Ibid.

LID, as well as the “establishment” argued that the governmental system in the United States was functional and imperative to preventing the spread of communism globally. The LID argued that without the aggressive foreign policy of the American government the “Red Wave” of communism would take over the world, and would lead to a loss of individual liberties.¹⁴ The fear mongering and aggressive actions against communism, exemplified through Vietnam, were a major part of the problems with the political system in the United States for the Hayden and the SDS. Hayden and the SDS argued that a fear of the USSR and communism had overtaken the domestic issues plaguing the American people. According to Hayden, fear based in ideology, racism, and imperialism, drove the American people to blindly support a political system which was not in their best interests. This caused a “us and them” situation, where you were either communist and evil, or capitalist and good. I became so ingrained in the American psyche to the point where communist was synonymous with evil or anti-establishment, leading to a crackdown on any anti-government social movements, particularly the student movement and civil rights movements.

The second element of the Port Huron Statement where the controversy arose came in the final section of the document. Here the divide between the “new left” and the “old left” went from being about ideology and theoretic, to physical actions that should be taken to change the political system. While the majority of the Statement could be seen as simply political dissatisfaction, the final section provided analysis, ideology, and strategy in which to change the American system. In the definition of what a New Left should be Hayden wrote, “a new left must start controversy across the land, if national apathy is to be reversed.”¹⁵ Hayden proposes

¹⁴ Sale, *SDS*, Pg.55.

¹⁵ SDS, *Statement*.

emulating the actions of the Civil Rights movement, namely the “Montgomery bus boycott and subsequent non-violent actions.” It was believed that these actions were necessary because “America rests in national stalemate, its goals ambiguous and tradition-bound instead of informed and clear, its democratic system apathetic and manipulated rather than “of, by, and for the people...””¹⁶ This statement was defined the reason for social action specifically by the students in America. The logic of using students was because “The ideal university is a community of controversy, within itself and in its effects on communities beyond.”¹⁷ The call to action was followed by the strategy to enact political and social change in America. According to the SDS this change could not come about through the legislature nor the commercial sector, but rather had to be rooted in college students as the “potential base and agency in a movement of social change.”¹⁸

The SDS, while unified around a central ideology, was never as monolithic as critics assumed. While upon initial conception the SDS was a singular group based out of Ann Arbor, as the organization grew, the various factions of the SDS began to divide themselves under regional banners and leadership. This segmenting into regional groups fell in line with the ideology of the SDS as the organization did not align with any one political or social theory, but also would not dismiss any sane and educated argument. This meant that factions would focus on different issues based off geographical location. As well as causing geographic fissures, the acceptance of any “sane and educated” argument brought controversy for the SDS. It meant that as an organization the SDS would not fully disavow communism, as communisms ideology was regarded as a “sane and educated” position. Additionally, and the various factions would align

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

themselves with separate partner organizations, such as the Black Panthers in 1966, whom the government viewed as radical and dangerous. It was these controversies which would firmly place the SDS on the FBI's radar. Specifically, the FBI included the SDS in their Counterintelligence Program, which monitored "subversive" groups and individuals such as the Black Panthers, Martin Luther King Jr., and Jane Fonda.¹⁹

The FBI and COINTELPRO

The Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) initially began as a program for the monitoring and disruption of domestic communist organizations in the United States. The program ran across four major US departments, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the National Security Agency (NSA), and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). With the mission to end communism globally, the FBI branch of COINTELPRO turned its attention to the SDS in 1962. The Port Huron Statement came under scrutiny as a manifesto allying the SDS with the communist party. The belief by FBI director Herbert Hoover that the SDS was a front for a domestic communist organization came largely from the fact that the Port Huron Statement was inclusive, as Hayden had refused to denounce communist ideology. As stated in the statement, "Students for a Democratic Society is an association of young people on the left. It seeks to create a sustained community of educational and political concerns: one bringing together liberals and radicals, activists and scholars, students and faculty."²⁰ While this was not directly supporting communism the FBI believed that "the current line of the national leadership reveals an adherence to Marxism-Leninism."²¹ While this

¹⁹ Federal Bureau of Investigation (Hereafter FBI), *COINTELPRO*, 2011, <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro>. (Oct. 10, 2020).

²⁰ SDS, *Statement*.

²¹ FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, HQ, Part 1 of 5, Pg. 12. FBI: Vault, 2011, <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-hq-part-01-of-05/view>, (Oct. 10, 2020).

tenuous link to the communist party became the reason for the surveillance, it was the SDS's anti-imperialist rhetoric, specifically the vocal dissent against the Vietnam War, which fueled the expansion of the FBI's actions.

In a memorandum about the SDS's headquarters from 1969, just after Nixon's inauguration, an FBI agent wrote, "The program of the SDS has moved from involvement in civil rights struggles to an anti-Vietnam War position and finally to its present advocacy of an anti-imperialist line..."²² This anti-imperialist rhetoric greatly concerned both the FBI and Richard Nixon as "China, Vietnam and Cuba are regarded as countries which are leading the worldwide struggles against United States imperialism."²³ Due to the stance of the SDS against imperialism, the FBI and the government believed that they were acting as an agent for foreign powers domestically to disrupt and overthrow the American government, specifically that of Richard Nixon. Despite the SDS's claim of adherence to non-violent actions, the FBI argued, based on the Port Huron Statement, that the SDS "called for the building of a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist movement" like those seen in Cuba and Vietnam.²⁴ This assessment by the FBI fueled Nixon's fears of the SDS as a credible threat to his presidency and the American political system as a whole.

Nixon's Election - 1968

The effects of Nixon's South America tour and the FBI denouncement of the SDS on became clear in Nixon's political stance during his election campaign in 1968. During his

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid. Pg. 23.

campaign, Nixon would regularly discuss the need for solidarity against communism as well as the need to remove political subversion such as the Student Movements. One of the clearest indications of Nixon's early stance against student movements came from his choice in running mates. Nixon appointed Spiro Agnew to be his running mate in 1968. The choice of Agnew as Vice-President was made for many reasons including his ties to popular republican Nelson Rockefeller and his career as an army captain in WWII.²⁵ One major reason why Nixon chose Agnew was that they held similar stances on social order. Agnew had been the Governor of Maryland and was known to be hardline anti-student and social movements.²⁶ Early in the wooing process Nixon commended Agnew on his actions during Baltimore riots of 1968, where in response to the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. thousands of people flooded the streets of Baltimore in despair and outrage. During these riots Agnew quickly called in the Maryland National Guard to patrol the traditionally Black neighbourhoods of Baltimore to subvert the riots. This tactic did not work perfectly, as the riot went on for four days, and resulted in five deaths, however, it did position Agnew as a leader who prioritized social order over freedom of speech. Despite violence and tragedy which came about during the Baltimore Riots, Nixon believed that Agnew's proactive approach to social disturbance prevented further damage and was exactly what he believed was necessary to deal with the national student movements to prevent them from devolving into the chaos Nixon witnessed in South America.²⁷

After the backlash Nixon received on his tour of South America by the student protestors, he became more reserved and centrist in his stances on foreign policy. During his election

²⁵ Lewis Chester, Geoffrey Hodgson, Bruce Page, *American Melodrama: The Presidential Campaign of 1968*, (New York; Viking Press, 1969), Pg. 243-244.

²⁶ Alex Csicssek, "Spiro T. Agnew and the Burning of Baltimore". In Jessica Elfenbein, (ed.). *Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth of an American City*. (Philadelphia; Temple University Press, 2011) Pg. 71.

²⁷ Mazo, "Screeching Mob"

campaign in 1968 this new stance was exemplified through his attitude towards the Vietnam War. American involvement in Vietnam had been an ongoing political issue prior to Nixon's election. To understand the animosity Nixon faced in his dealing with the War, it is important to know why domestically Americans were frustrated with traditionally "hawkish" military involvement in South East Asia.

Nixon's "inherited" War – Vietnam 1945 - 1968

In the early 20th century Indochina, now the countries of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, was a colony of the French Empire. This was a relatively unstable colony, as the people of the colony never fully accepted French rule. Due to the Second World War, France was forced to loosen control over the colony to direct more funds and attention to the Western Front. This allowed Japan to seize control over portions of Indochina. After the war was over, during reparations, the Vietnamese people, led by Ho Chi Minh demanded their independence. In September of 1945, Ho Chi Minh declared the North Vietnam, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), and instated himself as chairman. This declaration resulted in the Indochina War. Eventually, the French were defeated and relinquished control of the colony. In 1954 the French and Vietnamese met at Geneva to decide the fate of the colony, and Indochina was divided into Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Further Vietnam was divided into two parts, the North led by Ho Chi Minh, and South led by American supported Ngo Dinh Diem. The United States, who had provided support to France during the Indochina war, feared that Vietnam, particularly the DRV, would fall to communism due to the influences of China and the USSR. Under President John F. Kennedy, Diem was declared President of South Vietnam despite not being well like or supported by the people of the country. Diem was a Catholic in a largely Buddhist country. Additionally, Diem was highly corrupt, giving his family, friends, and

political allies prominent positions in the government and military. Diem's brother organized anti-communist "death squads" targeting Buddhists under the accusation of participating in communist activities.²⁸ The actions caused instability in the country, allowing the DRV to spread its allegiance south.²⁹ The spread of the DRV and its ideology scared the Americans, and President Kennedy sent 16,000 military advisors to South Vietnam to help maintain control.³⁰

After Kennedy's assassination in 1963, Lyndon B. Johnson assumed control of both the United States and the conflict in Vietnam. In August of 1964 Johnson was told that an American naval vessel, the USS Maddox, had been attacked in what became known as the Gulf of Tonkin Incident. This turned out to be false intelligence, however by the time that became known, Johnson had already escalated the conflict, declaring war in Vietnam and pledging 23,000 troops by the end of 1964.³¹ To achieve this, Johnson implemented a draft, which was incredibly unpopular, and caused his approval rating to drop below 50 percent.³² The implementation of the draft was one of the first major causes the SDS turned its attention towards. Protests began with chants such as, "Hey, Hey, LBJ. How many kids did you kill today?"³³

These tensions persisted into the 1968 election between Nixon and vice-President Herbert Humphrey. Seeing the tensions domestically, as well as remembering his own experience with hawkish policy in South America, Nixon sought a different tact to deal with the Vietnam War. During his 1968 election Nixon sought out the support of the current president of South Vietnam, Nguyen Van Thieu. The purpose of this support was both to ensure a working relationship once

²⁸ P.E. Catton, *Diem's Final Failure: Prelude to America's War in Vietnam*, (Lawrence, KS: Kansas University Press, 2002) Pg. 8-9

²⁹ Patrick Perry, "How it Began," *The Saturday Evening Post: Heroes of Vietnam* 289 (2017) 9.

³⁰ Ibid. Pg. 10

³¹ Ibid.

³² E.M. Schreiber, "Anti-War Demonstrations and American Public Opinion on the War in Vietnam," *The British Journal of Sociology* 27 (1976) 225-236.

³³ Ibid.

Nixon became president, but also to prevent President Johnson and Vice-President Humphrey from making any progress in their negotiations in South Vietnam. To gain the support of Thieu, Nixon approach the Grand Dame of the “China Lobby”, Anna Chennault, whom Nixon called the “Dragon Lady”.³⁴ Additionally, Dr. Henry Kissinger approached Nixon to offer his support in regard to foreign policy. Kissinger had been a representative to South Vietnam in the Johnson administration, giving him a leg up when it came to negotiating with Thieu. With the aid of Kissinger, Nixon approached Thieu and urged him to reject all offers put forward by Johnson and Humphrey. This interference became known as the “November Surprise”.³⁵ By preventing Johnson and Humphrey from negotiating, Nixon made them appear to be inept in foreign policy. At the same time Nixon began to announce his plan for the Vietnam War, “Peace with Honor”. In this plan, Nixon argued that he could achieve peace in Vietnam quickly, withdrawing American troops, while additionally stabilizing the region through negotiations. With this plan, as well as his political sabotage, Nixon secured his electoral victory.

³⁴ E.M. Schreiber, “Anti-War Demonstrations and American Public Opinion on the War in Vietnam,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 27 (1976) 56.

³⁵ Johnson knew of Nixon’s secret negotiations and privately he accused the President elect of treason. *Ibid*, pg. 58.

Chapter Two – 1969

The turning point of the Vietnam War, the increased surveillance of the SDS, and the shift in policing and domestic policy all coincided with the election of Richard Nixon. While Nixon's antipathy towards the student movement was well documented throughout his political career, his new diplomatic foreign policy was a change to his traditional 'hawkish' stance. Nixon, as well as his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, believed that showing the communist world a united American front would be the only way to have a strong footing for diplomacy, specifically, their policy of *Détente*. To do this they needed to quash the SDS protesting using the policing capabilities of the FBI. In this respect the SDS inadvertently effected Nixon's foreign policy.

To fully understand the complex relationship between the SDS and Nixon's foreign policy in 1969-71, we must start with a series of events involving SDS and the Black Panther Party that took place during Nixon's first term. By 1969, these seemingly disparate events worked in tandem to shape Nixon's foreign policy in unexpected ways.

Winter 1969

On a chilly day in January 1969, Richard Nixon was sworn in as the 37th president of the United States.¹ After expressing gratitude to the American people for awarding him the presidency, he set out his political agenda. In his inaugural address Nixon stated that, "the greatest honor history can bestow is the title of peacemaker."² He claimed his inauguration was a turning point in American history. This was indeed a turning point for America, one which would irreversibly change the relationship between the government and citizens from trusting of

¹ Interestingly, Nixon was sworn in on two different bibles. Both of which were family heirlooms.

² Richard M. Nixon, "First Inaugural Address." Speech, U.S. Capitol, Washington D.C., January 20, 1969.

the president to skeptical. Later in his address, Nixon stated that “We can be proud that [America’s youth] are better educated, more committed, more passionately driven by conscience than any generation in our history.”³ Despite beginning his presidency with these hopeful and encouraging words for the students of America, the actions he would undertake during the first term of his presidency would contradict these warm statements.

The disparity between Nixon’s words and actions was not surprising to the SDS. As Nixon had been in the political sphere since 1947, his track record with opposing social movements spoke for itself. During his inauguration in 1969, the SDS sought to remind the American people of just who Nixon was, beyond the political dogma.⁴ Covering the SDS’s protest of the inauguration was Hunter S. Thompson. Thompson was working as a freelance journalist and book author, covering the inauguration for the Boston Globe.⁵ For three days prior to the inauguration the SDS had been camping out along the parade rout, calling their protest the “counter-inaugural”.⁶ In Thompson’s words,

They [the SDS] were flanked front and back by navy-jacketed DC police and National Guardsmen, as well as an additional unarmed contingent from the Army’s 82nd Airborne Division. Not that it mattered as soon as the limousine appeared, they unleashed a dense hail of rocks and sticks. Members of the Secret Service, walking alongside, struggled to bat down the projectiles. Someone lofted a softball-sized wad of tinfoil that, in its precipitous arc, appeared to be falling directly toward the vehicle carrying Mr. and Mrs. Nixon—which accelerated, jolting its occupants and forcing the agents on the street into an accompanying run.⁷

³ Ibid.

⁴ Mark Hamilton Lytle, *America’s Uncivil Wars; the Sixties Era from Elvis to the Fall of Richard Nixon*, (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2006). Pg. 342.

⁵ Hunter S. Thompson, *The Great Shark Hunt: Strang Tales from a Strang Time*, (New York; Summit Book, 1969), pg. 23.

⁶ Ibid., Pg. 24, This is a play off their association with the counterculture movement.

⁷ Ibid.

This would be the first but far from the last time Nixon would interact with the SDS in a less than positive manner during his presidency. However, with the powers of the office, Nixon was able to become more proactive about his distrust and dislike for the movement. The first action Nixon would take against the movement would be to increase police surveillance on the SDS.

While the SDS had been on the FBI's radar since the initial declaration of the Port Huron Statement in 1962, during President John F. Kennedy's tenure, after the election of Nixon this surveillance grew immensely. Johnson's initial directive to the FBI was to watch the movement without interference. This was in response to the increase in protests in solidarity with the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s. This directive changed with Nixon's election. In January 1969, at Nixon's behest, the FBI began to conduct heavy surveillance and interference of the SDS, as well as any of their subsidiaries, by staking out their known meeting places, recording their conversations, and breaking into their homes.⁸ In fact, during the first year of Nixon's presidency nearly 4,000 students were arrested for acts of political upheaval.⁹ Nixon hoped to keep the group as disorganized and divided as possible, to avoid further protests such as those seen at his inauguration.

Increased attention to the SDS by the FBI was occurring across the country in 1969. In Richmond, Virginia, the Southern Students Organizing Committee (SSOC), the southern branch of the SDS, was a target for both local police and the FBI. In a memorandum to the chief of police for Richmond, the FBI stated to the Richmond Police that they have a, "very active interest in disrupting the New Left activities in Richmond, namely that of the Southern Students

⁸ Federal Bureau of Investigation (Hereafter FBI), *COINTELPRO*, 2011, <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro>. (Oct. 10, 2020).

⁹ Lytle, *Uncivil Wars*, Pg. 342.

Organizing Committee,” as they are potentially dangerous.¹⁰ Additionally, the memorandum provided potential ways to disrupt the student movements.¹¹

One way to disrupt the SDS was to prevent the various branches from travelling to meet each other. In San Diego, the SDS branch was prevented by the FBI from travelling to a convention in New York City. The FBI was told of the group's travel plans by a “reliable informant” in July 1969, a month before the group was set to travel New York. The members had purchased their airline tickets using a student discount. It was noted that this discount was the only reason many of the members could afford to travel to the convention. However, one member of the branch, name Stancliff, was 27 years old, and therefore not eligible for the ticket price. The FBI decided to wait until the group arrived at the airport, then notified the airline of the transgression. The airline refused any member of the group boarding, as the tickets had been purchased all together. The FBI noted that this action had two outcomes. The first was that it prevented the group from meeting with other branches of the SDS, thus alienating them, and it embarrassed Stancliff, discrediting him to his peers as he was seen as the reason they could not get to New York.¹² The FBI would continue to use other tactics to further separate the branches, while also implementing increased policing of the groups in their own regions.

One example of this increase in policing could be seen in Nevada. The FBI would disrupt meetings of the Las Vegas chapter of the SDS by calling in tips to the Las Vegas Police department that marijuana was being used at the meetings, causing the police to investigate and disrupt the gatherings. The reporting by the FBI was done prior to the meetings, without

¹⁰ FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, Richmond 1969, Pg. 3. FBI: Vault, 2011, <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-richmond-part-01-of-01/view>, (July 13, 2020).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, San Diego, Pg. 18-20. FBI: Vault, 2011, <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-san-diego-part-01-of-01/view>, (July 13, 2020).

substantial evidence of drug use, meaning that the Las Vegas Police would regularly conduct raids against law-abiding citizens.¹³ It should be noted that this tactic was implemented before Nixon declared his famous “war on drugs” policy. The interference by the FBI was so disruptive that by the Spring of 1969, the FBI, under Nixon’s directive, had pushed the Nevada Branch of the SDS to holding meetings in secret, eventually disbanding over the summer months.¹⁴ The constant threat of raids only increased the paranoia in the SDS, pushing them further underground. While the FBI did increase their operations against the SDS, by late May of 1969, it was still reported that they had no “tangible results”.¹⁵

The tensions between the different geographic factions of the SDS were exploited in Texas by the Houston Branch of the FBI when they chose to falsify documents saying that the SDS branch there had been skimming funds destined for Union support in California.¹⁶ The FBI sent fake letters to the *Houston Cougar*, a student newspaper at the University of Houston. These faked letters were addressed from the United Farmers Workers Union saying that they never received the money which had been raised for them by the SDS, insinuating the SDS stole the donations.¹⁷ The FBI chose the United Farmers Union as they were based far enough away from the Houston branch that regular communication was unlikely. Additionally, the Farmers' Union held a close relationship with the California branch of the SDS, so driving a wedge between the Union and the Houston SDS would also distance the California and Texas branches of the SDS.

¹³ FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, Las Vegas, Pg. 13-14. FBI: Vault, 2011, <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-las-vegas-part-01-of-01/view>, (July 13, 2020).

¹⁴ This was in part due to the end of the school year; however, some also claim it was to reduce attention from the police.

¹⁵ FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, Las Vegas, Pg. 17. FBI: Vault, 2011, <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-las-vegas-part-01-of-01/view>, (July 13, 2020)., the FBI appears to use tangible results as a result that can be immediately seen, or has some quantifiable difference.

¹⁶ FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, Houston, Pg. 41-42. FBI: Vault, 2011, <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-houston-part-01-of-01/view>, (July 13, 2020).

¹⁷ Ibid.

The purpose dividing the two branches of the SDS would be two fold, to discredit the SDS in the eyes of the University, as well as stoke the tensions between the branched in California and Texas, thus disrupting the SDS's national network. This plan appeared to have worked as the SDS was removed as an approved student organization by both the University of Houston and Rice University by the end of the 1969 academic year. The FBI saw their discreditation by the respective universities as the first step to a full discreditation by the general American populace. The presence of the SDS in the minds of the American public was not significant at this time, however, Nixon's experience with student movements in South America seemed to have caused paranoia in this regard. A holdout University remained in Austin at the University of Texas, where the SDS was still granted status and access to meeting spaces by the university administration.¹⁸ The increased scrutiny on the SDS from Nixon's inauguration to the end of the academic year disrupted the SDS on local levels, however, for Nixon this was not enough as he want a full national takedown of the SDS. Nixon turned to policy to attempt to further his goal of eliminating the threat the SDS was to his political support.

Nixon's first mark on Domestic Policy

In the first few months after his election, Nixon's set out plans for dealing with what he saw as a "violent and disorderly" group were few and far between.¹⁹ Nixon wanted to be associated with social progression, yet he also wanted to roll back democratic programs under Kennedy's *New Frontier* and Johnson's *Great Society*.²⁰ He advocated a strong need for "self-

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Richard M. Nixon, "Law and Order- 1968 nomination acceptance speech." Speech, Republican National Committee, Miami Beach, Florida, August 8, 1968., This is to be expected as the first few months after an election rarely hold much change domestically as presidents adjust to their new position.

²⁰ Richard M. Nixon, *RN: The Memories of Richard Nixon*, (New York; Warner Books, 1979). Pg. 352

expression” yet felt the word had lost its true meaning in the current political climate. Nixon noted in a radio interview that, “All history has been a struggle between man’s thrust towards violence and his yearning for peace... The old violence parades today in a new uniform... At home, it may masquerade as ‘civil disobedience’ or ‘freedom,’ and it sometimes marches under the banner of legitimate dissent.”²¹ The old violence which Nixon referred to here appeared to be referring to the violence experienced in traditional wars.

Nixon believed that to prevent further perversion of the term “self-expression” from being co-opted by the “hippie” SDS, certain policies needed to be put into place to “[stand] against prevailing social winds.”²² One notable policy was the opposition to the legalization of marijuana. This policy was targeted towards the SDS and like-minded groups as they supported this issues under the larger banner of personal liberties. The illegality of marijuana would also be used as a tool against the SDS by the Nixon administration.. While the SDS was not part of the Counterculture movement, Nixon would regularly conflate the two groups as a way to discredit the SDS as a legitimate social-political organization. In doing this Nixon was able to increase surveillance and interference on the SDS as they were considered “dirty hippies” whose drug use needed to be disrupted and penalized. While the domestic policies Nixon implemented in the first few months of his tenure were limited, his foreign policies were far reaching in scope and hawkish.

²¹ Richard M. Nixon, *Nixon Speaks Out: Major Speeches and Statements by Richard M. Nixon in the Presidential Campaign of 1968*, (Washington D.C.; Nixon-Agnew Campaign Committee, 1969), Pg. 31-32.

²² Nixon, *RN*, Pg. 354.

Shift from Destruction to Détente

For most of his political career prior to his presidency Nixon seemed “almost the personification of militant resistance to the expansion of international communism.”²³ This “hawkish” mentality towards foreign policy could be seen in his attitudes towards South America, most notably Venezuela. While Vice-President under Eisenhower, Nixon would almost always side with the strongest possible response to any communist threat, yet the foreign policies Nixon would enact during his tenure would seem to fly in the face of this predisposition. This new, diplomatic, approach to foreign policy could be seen the most clearly in Nixon’s response to the ongoing Vietnam and Cold Wars.

Nixon’s campaign platform promised new and stronger leadership in the Vietnam War. He said that under his guidance America would achieve “peace with honor” in Vietnam.²⁴ The Vietnam War was becoming increasingly unpopular, especially considering President Johnson’s increasing of the draft, and the relative failure of the Tet Offensive in September of 1968.²⁵ In response to Johnson’s policies, the SDS had increased protests on university campuses. It became such a tumultuous time, with students burning draft cards staging vocal protests, that the Secret Service would not allow Johnson to appear on any university campuses for safety concerns.²⁶ Nixon saw the backlash Johnson was met with and redirected his traditional hawkish

²³ A. James Reichley, *Conservatives in an Age of Change: the Nixon and Ford Administration*, (Washington D.C.; The Brookings Institution, 1981). Pg. 98.

²⁴ Jeffery Kimball, *Nixon’s Vietnam War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998). Pg. 25

²⁵ Gary Hess, *Vietnam: Explaining America’s Lost War* (Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2015). Pg. 166.

²⁶ Ben J. Wattenberg, *Fighting Words: A Tale of How Liberals Created Neo-Conservatism*, (New York; MacMillan, 2008) Pg. 40.

foreign policy. Nixon changed his traditionally hardline foreign policy position away from military intervention and towards diplomatic solutions with regards to his dealings with the USSR, China, and Vietnam under his policies of Détente and Rapprochement. While he still promised a stronger leadership in Vietnam, he made no promises about increasing troops or combat.

Nixon's shift towards a diplomatic foreign policy went beyond his Vietnam War tactic. Most notable was the new Cold War policy of Détente. The escalation of the nuclear tensions under Kennedy and Johnson had put the Western World on edge. With the Cuban Missile Crisis, China becoming a nuclear power, and distrust between the USSR and the USA, fear of nuclear war was prominent in the minds of many Americans. In keeping with his diplomatic solutions, Nixon, and his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, proposed the idea of détente.

The definition of Détente was the relaxing or easing of tensions between nations through negotiation. Nixon and Kissinger proposed that to prevent further escalation of nuclear tensions or military combat, the major superpowers needed to come together and create treaties to ensure the safety and prosperity of each respective nation. Under this policy, Kissinger was to approach the North Vietnamese in an effort to ease tensions through negotiations. These negotiations would be held in secret between Kissinger and North Vietnamese Politoburo member Le Duc Tho, starting in 1969 and ending with the Paris Peace Accord in 1973.²⁷ To have the optimal position from which to negotiate, the United States would additionally require a united front to present to the World. The policy of Détente was wildly divergent from Nixon's traditional stance

²⁷Unknown, "Memorandum of Conversation, Paris, February 21, 1970, 9:40 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.," FRUS 1969-1976, Volume XLII, Vietnam: The Kissinger-Le Duc Tho Negotiations. Document 2. Pg. 15.

on foreign policy, as he had regularly proposed the bombing of communist countries such as Cuba, rather than the negotiations which took place under President Kennedy.²⁸

The vehement criticism of Johnson's Vietnam policies by the Student Movement and the media forced Nixon to reconsider his traditional military stance after his election. Due to the American media's perception of the Tet Offensive as a defeat for the US, the American people, particularly the Student Movement, were war weary.²⁹ With no clear path to victory in sight, and no clear explanation to the purpose of the war, the anti-war sympathisers, including the SDS, demanded an immediate American withdrawal from Vietnam. As Nixon had promised "peace with honor" he saw immediate withdrawal as an impossibility, however, this did not mean that he was not affected by the demands of the anti-war movement. Instead, after the election, Nixon immediately put forward a new diplomatic policy of Vietnamization, to appease both the student left and the anti-war center in the United States.

Vietnamization fell under Nixon and Kissinger's larger foreign policy of détente, meaning its purpose was to ease tensions between the United States and Vietnam. To do this the United States would work closely with the South Vietnamese, as to slowly transfer all military responsibility over to the South Vietnamese army. This would have taken away any responsibility America had in the region, while also providing support to the South Vietnamese without the perception of abandoning them. The policy would have required closer ties between American troops on the ground and South Vietnamese troops, for the purposes of training and providing support. Nixon had hoped that this policy would nullify America's commitment to the South Vietnamese government and people, while still preserving their sovereignty, thus

²⁸ Reichley, *Conservatism*, Pg. 105.

²⁹ Hess, *America's Lost War*, Pg. 155

appeasing the leftist demand for an American withdrawal from Vietnam. After implementing this policy in January 1969, it would quickly fail both in Vietnam and domestically.

The failure of Vietnamization domestically came about due to one key factor of the policy. This was the implementation and subsequent revelation of *Operation Menu*. *Operation Menu* was the secret bombing campaign Nixon sanctioned in Cambodia with the purpose to force the Viet Cong to the negotiation table.³⁰ The operation began in March of 1969 and would continue to May of the following year. Nixon chose to keep the operation secret as the operation was an attack on a neutral nation without Congressional approval. Additionally, in keeping the operation a secret, Nixon would not have to face opposition backlash from anti-war supporters, who he saw being inspired by the fracturing SDS. As anti-war sentiment was the glue which held the SDS together, Nixon believed that if they were spurned on to work together it would frustrate his plans to end the war.³¹ Nixon believed that if the Viet Cong saw American dissent for the war increasing due to the influence of the student movement, they would have little incentive to come to the negotiation table. In response to the Easter Protest of 1969, in April, Kissinger said, “give us six months and if we haven’t ended the war by then, you can come back and tear down the White House fence.”³²

One reason Nixon tried to hide *Operation Menu* from the American public, was to agitate the leftist movements, news outlets continued to report deaths in both Vietnam and Cambodia, including those of South Vietnamese soldiers who were American allies. The number of dead continued to rise through out the Spring and by June Nixon’s critics argued that Nixon

³⁰ Hess, *America’s Lost War*, Pg. 180.

³¹ Lytle, *Uncivil Wars*, Pg. 341

³² Henry Kissinger, *Ending the Vietnam War: A History of America’s Involvement in and Extrication from the Vietnam War*, (New York; Touchstone Publishing, 2003). Pg. 7.

was doing nothing more “than changing the color of the corpses.”³³ With the media still providing mass coverage of the War, Nixon was unable to hide the operation, leading to a sharp rise in protests, resulting in the Summer of 1969.

Summer 1969

The summer of 1969 in the United States, was one which would vex the newly sworn in President. The summer was marked by major cultural moments such as the Stonewall Riots, the Manson Murders, and Mohammed Ali’s draft refusal trial. Along with these major moments American youths and students were preaching social philosophy and leftist politics while blatantly defying established social structures, such as monogamy, as well as narcotics laws.³⁴ While these Counterculture leaders were not necessarily part of the SDS, President Nixon and his administration viewed the groups as one unified entity. These so called, “dirty hippies” confused and angered citizens of major cities. In New York citizens protested Mayor John Lindsay saying, “Lindsay sees the hippies, but he won’t see the taxpayers.”³⁵ Both contributing to this animosity, and building on it, the FBI launched another wave of attacks against the SDS.

As had happened in the spring of 1969 in Houston and Las Vegas, the FBI sought to undermine and disrupt the SDS in Chicago during their convention. The FBI saw the upcoming SDS national convention as the perfect time to sow the seeds of discord to further disrupt the organization. In late spring of 1969, the FBI field office in Chicago sent a letter FBI director J

³³ Melvin Small, *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves*, (New Brunswick, NJ; Rutgers University Press, 1988), Pg. 62.

³⁴ Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America*, (New York; Scribner, 2008) Pg. 185.

³⁵ Ibid.

Edgar Hoover about a potential counterintelligence action against the SDS.³⁶ The field officer noted that due to the recent divide in regional SDS offices, namely between the pro-national office and the pro-progressive labour faction, there were opportunities to further the divide and prevent the national reunification of the SDS. They also point out there is some leadership quarrels in the national office with former National secretary Mike Klonsky and national interorganizational secretary Bernadine Dohrn at odds with each other.³⁷ The field agent goes on to say that, “a careful analysis will be made to determine the areas in which they are vulnerable...Recommendations to attack weaknesses will be made.”

Further exploiting the rifts between the SDS factions the FBI sent letters to various “key persons” in the SDS on June 6, 1969, accusing the national office faction from refusing to hold a national convention for fear of the strength of the Progressive Labour faction (PLP). While the recipients of the letter did not believe it really came from the PLP camp, they felt that the PLP camp believed what was written in the fake letters.³⁸ The FBI noted that just after the letters were disseminated, the national leadership of the SDS rented the Chicago Coliseum to host their convention.³⁹ The animosity building up to the convention came to a head with the pro-national faction of the SDS walking out and leaving the PLP camp to host the convention alone.

In the final days of the national convention the FBI sought to further discredit the SDS in the eyes of the public. A Chicago field agent reached out to a journalist at the *Chicago Tribune*

³⁶ FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, Chicago Part 1, Pg. 39. FBI: Vault, 2011 <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-chicago-part-01-of-01/view>, (July 13, 2020).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Bernadine Dohrn would go on to be one of the founding members of the militant left group the Weather Underground.

³⁸ *Ibid.* Pg. 37-38, Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS; The rise and development of the Students for a Democratic Society, the organization that became the major expression of the American left in the sixties- its passage from student protest to institutional resistance to revolutionary activism, and its ultimate impact on American politics and life* (New York; Random House, 1973). Pg. 558.

³⁹ FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, Chicago Part 1, Pg. 41. FBI: Vault, 2011 <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-chicago-part-01-of-01/view>, (July 13, 2020).

to write a story about the factional disputes going on in the SDS. Additionally, the FBI told the reporter that both major parties of the SDS had ties to the pro-Chinese communist party.⁴⁰ This lead many centrist SDS members to distance themselves from the group due to fear of communist ties and influences. The FBI also sought to disrupt the alliances the SDS had with other social movements as a way to destroy their credibility.

Since early in the inception of the SDS they had maintained ties to the Black Panther Party. The Black Panther Party (BPP) was a revolutionary socialist organization founded by Bobby Seale and Huey Newton with the goal advancing the place of African Americans in society. According to J. Edgar Hoover, the BPP was “the greatest threat to the internal security of our country.”⁴¹ While the government viewed the BPP on a largely negative light, they were a foundational part of the lives of many African Americans, providing breakfast clubs for children, free health clinics, and education.⁴² Despite their controversial image, played a major role in furthering social movements at the time, especially the SDS. The FBI sought to disrupt this relationship in an effort to alienate the SDS from other leftist movements and cause infighting among Nixon’s opposition. To upset this alliance the FBI sent informants to BPP leaders “to point out that the SDS was exploiting the BPP, intending to use them as a black army for a white revolution.”⁴³ While no tangible results were immediately noted, the tensions between the groups would escalate in the following months, which will be discussed later.

⁴⁰ This was not true, however the PLP did have Maoist sympathies.

⁴¹ John Blake, “What the Black Panthers Taught Donald Trump,” CNN (Cable News Network, February 17, 2016), <https://www.cnn.com/2016/02/16/us/black-panthers/>.

⁴² Dhoruba Bin Wahad, Assata Shakur, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Jim Fletcher, Tanaquil Jones, and Sylvere Lotringer. *Still Black, Still Strong: Survivors of the U.S. War Against Black Revolutionaries*. (Oakland, CA; Semiotext, 1993) Pg. 221-242.

⁴³ FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, HQ Part 1 of 5, Pg. 13. FBI: Vault, 2011 <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-hq-part-01-of-05/view>, (July 13, 2020).

It was in this climate that the SDS held its convention. The climate of the convention was reflective of the constant interference the SDS dealt with. The choice in venue, Chicago Coliseum, had been influenced by the anti-youth mentality at the time as well as the FBI interference. While SDS conventions were traditionally held on college campuses, due to the rising distain of the youth movement more than fifty colleges and universities had refused the SDS's request for permission to use the campuses.⁴⁴ This was already building on the distrust for the SDS propagated by the FBI during the school term. Despite the hurdles, the SDS continued with its convention, with Abbie Hoffman saying, "We have come to praise the SDS, not to bury it."⁴⁵ While the SDS did manage to find a venue for their convention, the trials of holding it were not so easily overcome.

Outside of the Chicago Coliseum, police of every jurisdiction set up camp hoping to find incriminating evidence worthy of shutting down the convention. Police from the Chicago PD including uniformed officer, SWAT, plainclothes detectives and the infamous Chicago Red Squad all surrounded the building. Additionally, FBI agents and out of jurisdiction police offers set up camps with high powered cameras pointed at the building.⁴⁶ This formidable oversight by the police caused paranoia amongst the leadership of the SDS. Some in the SDS leadership filed complaints against the police for harassment and undue scrutiny to which the FBI replied that, "This is America, people can take pictures without fear of harassment."⁴⁷ In part, the leadership feared, and rightly so, that the FBI's scrutiny did not end with simple surveillance. Fear of infiltration was of the utmost concern to the SDS, so much so that the leadership instituted measure to ensure that every attendee of the convention was in fact an actual member of the

⁴⁴ Sale, *SDS*, Pg. 557.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid. Pg. 558

⁴⁷ Ibid.

organization. These measures included registration upon entry to the hall, followed by a security frisking, where all weapons, recording devices, and drugs were confiscated.⁴⁸ The leadership was determined not to give the police any legitimate reason to raid the convention, thus undermining the social and political message of the movement. However, despite the best efforts of the SDS leadership, the FBI's resources and planning meant that their interference was inevitable.

Nixon's Appeal to the Centrist

The Summer of 1969 was fraught with tensions between leftist groups and the general public, between different social movements, and within the SDS itself. New York Times journalist James Reston wrote about the time that, "some authority must oppose anarchy."⁴⁹ This cry for help was eagerly answered by Nixon, who was searching for reasons to legitimate his hatred of the leftists and the SDS. Through speeches disavowing the SDS and their protests, Nixon stoked the fire of disillusionment with the protestors. In an interview with David Farber one man said, "What I don't like about the students, the loudmouth ones, is that they think they know so much they can speak for everyone, because they think they're right and the rest of us aren't clever enough and can't talk like they can."⁵⁰ Nixon capitalized on this sentiment, positioning himself as the "everyman" and the voice of the people. Nixon would announce his new welfare plan, the Family Assistance Plan, in the summer of 1969. This plan was to implement a negative income tax for working parents. This would mean that those parents would earn supplemental funding to help support their families. Additionally to position himself on the

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Melvin Small, *Covering Dissent: The Media and the Anti-Vietnam War Movement*, (New Brunswick, NJ; Rutgers University Press, 1995). Pg. 147.

⁵⁰ David Farber, "The Silent Majority and Talk about Revolution," in Farber, ed., *The Sixties: From Memory to History*, (Chapel Hill, NC; University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

side of the everyman centrist, Nixon encouraged highly politicized federal prosecutions of leftist leaders, including Huey Newton.⁵¹ By biding his time and allowing the FBI to undermine the SDS, Nixon was able to focus on the more pressing issue of the Vietnam War.

The mainstream discussion of the Vietnam War had dissipated largely in Nixon's first several months of office.⁵² This was beneficial to Nixon, as his plans in Vietnam relied on secrecy and the appearance of a united American front. However, a downside to his actions against the SDS, especially the publicization of their national convention in the news, was that the Vietnam War and its opposition once again became a central conversation in the media, as well as around the watercooler.⁵³ Through the summer of 1969 Nixon would publicly continue to preach his policy of Vietnamization as the way to gracefully achieve "peace with honor" in Vietnam. However, as is the case with many politicians, his actions did not support his words.

While proselytizing the ideas of Vietnamization and negotiation, Nixon and Kissinger were actively looking for a way to end the war through force. Kissinger told the National Security Council, "I refuse to believe that a little fourth-rate power like North Vietnam doesn't have a breaking point."⁵⁴ As an attempt to find this breaking point Nixon and Kissinger looked at expanding the incursion into Cambodia as a means to stop supply chains to the North Vietnamese.⁵⁵ This would make *Operation Menu* more public. The hope had been that if it was successful, and brought down the North Vietnamese, then it would be supported by the public. A source in Nixon's cabinet said that, "[if] it had succeeded, it might have whetted our appetite for

⁵¹ Lytle, *Uncivil Wars*, Pg. 347.

⁵² Daniel Ellsberg, *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers*, (New York; Penguin Books, 2002). Pg. 74.

⁵³ Ellsberg, *Secrets*, Pg. 226.

⁵⁴ Tad Szulc, *Illusion of Peace: Foreign Policy in the Nixon Years*, (New York; Viking Press, 1978), Pg. 150.

⁵⁵ Reichley, *Conservatism*, Pg. 118

more. Public opinion might have changed in a very dramatic way.”⁵⁶ With this mentality, Nixon and Kissinger began the expansion of their operation. However, due to the problematic timing, stemming from Nixon’s own actions, attention was drawn towards the actions of the American troops in Vietnam. This meant the escalation of Vietnam under Nixon, coincided with media attention, leading to increased domestic tensions in the Fall of 1969.

Fall 1969 – The *Days of Rage*

By the end of the summer, the SDS was becoming more and more fractured. Notably, the biggest divide stemmed from the allies of Bernadine Dohrn and a radical branch of the PLP. This group would completely separate from the SDS in the Fall of 1969 and form the infamous Weather Underground.⁵⁷ The Weather Underground, or Weathermen, were led by Bill Ayers and Dohrn. Ayers had risen to prominence in the SDS as the leader of its flag ship chapter at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, initially affiliating himself with the PLP branch of the SDS. When the PLP took over the national convention, Ayers was elected as Education Secretary, giving him access to a larger group of potential allies. During this, Ayers began to become increasingly militant, with “his infatuation with street fighting ... and develop[ing] a language of confrontational militancy that became more and more pronounced over the year [1969].”⁵⁸ Capitalizing on his and Dohrn’s rising popularity amongst the collapsing SDS, Ayers founded the Weather Underground in August 1969.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, This was a confidential source in the administration.

⁵⁷ This divide was not fully accepted by the FBI or the Government, so the Weather Underground was still regarded as associated with the SDS.

⁵⁸ Sale, *SDS*, Pg. 632.

According to the Weathermen,

The primary purpose, and the stance, of our organization could not possibly be to “turn people on,” or to have them like us, or to make them think that we are nice, but to compel them to confront the antagonistic aspects of their own life experience and consciousness by bringing the war home, and to help them make the right choice over a period of time, after initially shaking up and breaking through the thick layers of chauvinism-racism-defeatism. If being “arrogant,” “pushy,” “hard,” if putting some people up against the wall, helps to create that tension and the requisite fluidity and space, then we ought to be “arrogant” and “hard”.⁵⁹

The notion of “bringing the war home” was far too militant for the more moderate members of the PLP branch of the SDS. Ayers and the Weathermen were denounced as needlessly militant and radical. Despite being denounced by the SDS and having little to no contact with active members of the SDS, the FBI believed that the two organizations were intrinsically linked and would regularly refer to the Weathermen as the SDS.⁶⁰ The denunciation by the SDS did nothing to delay the Weathermen and the *Days of Rage* commenced in October of 1969.

The *Days of Rage* was a string of attacks by the Weathermen on various government buildings and monuments in October of 1969. The significance of these attacks, as it applies to the SDS, was that the FBI believed that the SDS was to blame for many of the actions taken by the Weathermen. The first attack perpetrated by the Weathermen, and pinned on the SDS, was on the Haymarket Police monument in Chicago. The Haymarket statue was meant to commemorate the Haymarket affair of 1886, an event where protestor supporting labours in Chicago were peacefully protesting when police shot into the crowd and killed one protestor and injured several others. In the confusing aftermath, someone threw dynamite which killed seven police officers and four civilians. To commemorate the “bravery” of the police the statue was erected. Ayers saw this statue as a monument to the corruption of the justice system, and the

⁵⁹ "You Don't Need A Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows." *New Left Notes*. June 18, 1969

⁶⁰ FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, Chicago, Pg. 22. FBI: Vault, 2011 <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-chicago-part-01-of-01/view>, (July 13, 2020).

perfect location to launch his wave of attacks.⁶¹ On October 6, 1969, the Weathermen blew up the statue with an unknown explosive. The explosion was so large that it blew out 100 nearby windows and scattered pieces of the destroyed statue on the Kennedy Expressway located below the park.⁶² This bombing further isolated the Weathermen from the SDS; however, Ayers was still hopeful that SDS members would show up to his planned rally on October 8th in Chicago.⁶³

Prior to the rally, 800 members of the SDS and Weathermen showed up to participate in the rally. Once they arrived, they were confronted with 2000 members of the Chicago Police Department. This arrival of the police resulted in nearly 500 protestors abandoning the cause, leaving about 300 members to launch the *Days of Rage*, with nearly half of the protestors being from the Weathermen. In support of the protest, Tom Hayden told the crowd to not believe the rumors in the press that the Chicago Seven, who a year before had been tried on charges of conspiracy and inciting riots, disagreed with their cause, and to continue.⁶⁴ With the crowd energetic and anxious, they were finally told where they would be marching to, the Drake Hotel, home of the judge from the Chicago Seven Trial.⁶⁵ At 10:25 pm they began their march to the hotel, smashing windows and cars along the path. When confronted with the police, the rioters charged in smaller groups forcing the police to break formation. One of the smaller groups made it to the front gate of the hotel; however, before they could gain entry the unarmed protestors were fired on by police and subdued. By the end of the night 28 police officers were injured, 6

⁶¹ Bryan Burrough, *Days of Rage: America's Radical Underground, the FBI, and the Forgotten Age of Revolutionary Violence*, (New York; Penguin Books, 2016). Pg. 63.

⁶² "Haymarket Statue Bombed", *Chicago Tribune*, October 7, 1969.

⁶³ Bill Ayres, *Fugitive Days: A Memoir*, (New York; Penguin Books, 2001). Pg. 45.

⁶⁴ Jeremy Varon, "Between Revolution 9 and Thesis 11: Will We Learn (Again) to Start Worrying and Change the World," In *The New Left Revisited: Critical Perspectives on the Past*. John McMillian and Paul Buhle, eds. (Philadelphia; Temple University Press, 2002), Abbie Hoffman and John Froines also showed up but left without speaking.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Weathermen were shot, and 68 rioters were arrested. There were no casualties.⁶⁶ Many of the arrested were members of the leadership of the Weathermen and the SDS.

The next day, October 9th, the “Women’s militia” staged a march at Grant Park. The group of approximately 70 women, largely from the Weathermen, were addressed by Dohrn who instructed them to march to the near by draft board and raid it. The group was overtaken by the police before they could even leave the park. In reaction to the threat the Governor of Illinois, Richard Ogilvie, announced that he had called in 2500 National Guardsmen to “protect Chicago”.⁶⁷ In reaction to the increased security, as well as the fact that a number of their leadership had already been arrested, the Weathermen cancelled their planned march later in the evening.

While the Weathermen’s march did not go forward, a peaceful protest led by the national party of the SDS, now called the Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM), was held in front of the federal courthouse. It was here that the tensions between the Black Panthers and the PLP branch of the SDS, now made up of largely Weathermen, came to a head. Combined with the actions taken by the FBI earlier in the summer to isolate the SDS, the BPP saw the actions of the Weathermen as, “anarchistic, opportunistic, adventuristic, and Custeristic.”⁶⁸ At the RYM’s march, Fred Hampton, the current leader of the BPP, completely disassociated his group with the radical Weathermen and the PLP.⁶⁹

The *Days of Rage* continued on October 10th with the largest of the marches. Over 2000 protestors, led by the RYM, would march on the largest Spanish-speaking neighbourhood in

⁶⁶ Sale, *SDS*, Pg. 608.

⁶⁷ Varon, “Between Revolution”. Pg. 81.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, Custeristic was a made-up word to describe being like a confederate (i.e. like General Custer)

⁶⁹ They would still be somewhat associated with the RYM, but the relationship would not be the easy going one of the pasts.

Chicago. It is important to note about this march that its significance is that it undeniably associated the *Days of Rage* with the peaceful faction of the SDS, the RYM. This is because it was the event with the largest number of people and was widely covered by the media. While police were present at this march, no actions were taken, and the protest remained peaceful. The last of the *Days of Rage* was not nearly as peaceful.

The final day was October 11th. Many of the Weathermen leadership which had been arrested on the first day had been released at this point and sought to reignite the desire for direct militant action.⁷⁰ To achieve this the Weathermen led a group of about 300 protestors through the largest business district in Chicago called the Loop. The protestors were met by police, both Chicago PD and National Guards, heavily armed and lining both sides of the street. Despite the police's preparation, the protestors managed to break through the police line, and **wreak** havoc on the buildings in the Loop, breaking windows as well as smashing cars parked on the street.⁷¹ The police quickly sprang into action, blocking off the protestors. In the process, a city attorney was paralyzed after an altercation with Weathermen member Brian Flannagan. While the details of what happened were unclear, Flannagan was acquitted on all counts, including attempted murder. With this final act the *Days of Rage* came to an end.

The aftermath of the *Days of Rage* was chaotic to say the least. Over the course of the four days, 287 members of the Weathermen were arrested, along with most of the SDS leadership.⁷² Chicago went into a state of rebuilding and cleaning up after the destruction caused by the protesters. In total, the City of Chicago had to spend nearly \$200,000 both to cover the

⁷⁰ Dan Berger, *Outlaws of America: The Weather Underground and the Politics of Solidarity*, (Oakland, CA; AK Press, 2005) Pg. 64.

⁷¹ Ron Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew: A History of the Weather Underground*, (New York; Verso, 1997). Pg. 106.

⁷² FBI, *Documents on the WUO, Part 1a*, Chicago Field Office, 1976, <http://foia.fbi.gov/foiaindex/weather.htm>, Note that as these numbers came from the FBI, it is unclear if everyone arrested was actually part of the Weathermen, or simply labeled that way by arresting officers.

cost of the National Guard and to rebuild.⁷³ The huge cost, combined with the fear of violence, pitted the general public against the Weathermen. In the *Chicago Tribune*, headlines such as “Radicals go on Rampage” and “Cops and Troops Guard City: S.D.S Rioting ‘an outrage’” were splashed across the front page. Importantly, despite the fact that these actions were largely taken by the Weathermen, with the RYM (SDS) remaining peaceful, the entire blame for the carnage fell on the shoulders of the SDS. With the SDS attached to the *Days of Rage* in the mind of the public, government, and police, efforts to quash leftist organizations were escalated.

The escalation of efforts against the SDS began on the second *Day of Rage*, October 9, 1969. In an effort to disrupt the SDS and Weathermen’ protests the FBI sent an informant into the demonstration to gain information about the individuals protesting including names, pictures, and locations.⁷⁴ Unfortunately for the informant, he was quickly identified by members of the Weathermen and severely beaten. This caused the Weathermen to officially change their name to the Weather Underground, as they had to go ‘underground’ or into hiding to escape arrest.⁷⁵ The revelation that the FBI was in fact infiltrating the SDS reinforced all the fear the group's leaders had about surveillance. This would be far from the last time the FBI would take this kind of action.

In the following weeks after the *Days of Rage* the FBI turned to increasingly legally questionable means of surveillance and counter-intelligence actions against the SDS. On October 13, 1969, the FBI Chicago field office wrote to the Detroit field office looking for recommendations of actions which could be taken. The Detroit office replied that one of the Chicago Seven, Rennie Davis, was now in the employ of the CIA, and would be perfectly placed

⁷³ Ibid., This is approximately 1.5 million today

⁷⁴ Varon, “Between Revolution”. Pg. 81.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

to disrupt the SDS from within. Davis would be charged with urging illegal activities, as well as reporting on any activities that could warrant prosecution against the SDS.⁷⁶ This plan was given serious thought, however, at the time Davis was still in the process of finishing his defence trial, and fear of “embarrassment to the Bureau” prevented the action from going forward at that time. Instead the FBI sought to “exploit [Davis’s] financial weakness and will submit appropriate recommendations as situations more favourable to counter-intelligence develop.”⁷⁷ It appeared as though a couple of weeks later, in December 1969, the conditions became more suitable for counter-intelligence.

In a memorandum from the Chicago Field Office, an agent wrote,

The major thrust of the counterintelligence activity of the Chicago Division is being directed against the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)(Weathermen). As previous applied tactics of embarrassment, degradation, and creation of factional splits do not seem to be pertinent to the life style and organization of this group, the primary tactic being applied is the development of prosecutable federal or local cases against the members of this group.⁷⁸

The goal of this was to cripple the SDS through arresting its national leadership, making it difficult to hold the large-scale protests that had been seen earlier in the year. The FBI noted that while some of the leadership of the SDS and Weathermen had been charged with crimes stemming from Anti-Riot laws violated in the *Days of Rage*, other would need to be implicated elsewhere. This escalation of tactics notes the change in the FBI from surveying the SDS and reporting minor crimes to the police, to implicating the members in larger crimes and fully infiltrating the organization.

⁷⁶ FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, Detroit, Pg. 21. FBI: Vault, 2011 <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-detroit-part-01-of-01/view>, (July 13, 2020).

⁷⁷ FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, Chicago, Pg. 24. FBI: Vault, 2011 <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-chicago-part-01-of-01/view>, (July 13, 2020).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Pg. 22

Across the United States the FBI was targeting members of the SDS. In the flagship chapter in Michigan, the Detroit field office sent a letter to one of the female leader's parents (her name has been redacted) in an effort to get them to remove her from school, and therefore the SDS. An FBI agent wrote,

[redacted] is a member of SDS. Detroit has suggested that in an effort to neutralize her, an anonymous letter be prepared and sent to her parents setting forth facts concerning her living conditions in Detroit. The anonymous letter would indicate that [redacted] is living in a mixed collective where she has contracted an 'infection' and is in need of parental help. The letter would be purportedly from a concerned friend.⁷⁹

With the implication of moral questionable living arrangements, as well as implying sexually transmitted diseases, the FBI additionally sought to shame the target from ever seeking to rejoin the SDS. According to a later FBI memorandum, there was no tangible result from this action. Additionally, the Detroit office sought to intimidate the University of Michigan (UofM) administration and faculty, to prevent support for the SDS.

In a memorandum an FBI agent noted that it had sent letters to every member of the Board of Regents at UofM warning that members of the faculty were acting as the leadership of the SDS. The members targeted were largely in the arts departments and had acted as faculty mentors to members of the SDS. The FBI noted that by doing this pressure on the Administration had increased. Additionally, the FBI warned that "several young faculty members were aggressively involved with leadership to the New Left at the U of M... [and should not be] given tenure with the U of M faculty and have to secure employment elsewhere."⁸⁰ In reaction to this the President of UofM announced that her would pursue criminal charges against members of the

⁷⁹ FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, Detroit, Pg. 27. FBI: Vault, 2011 <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-detroit-part-01-of-01/view>, (July 13, 2020).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Pg.14

SDS, as well as try and throw them off campus.⁸¹ This action dealt a large blow to the RYM and the national leadership of the SDS who had seen UofM as their stronghold since the conception of the group. While not the most aggressive action taken against the SDS, the FBI did manage to win a symbolic victory.

The Silent Majority – Nixon’s policy in the Fall of 1969

While the FBI operated in secret to try to undermine the SDS, Nixon publicly opposed the actions of the *Days of Rage* and denounced all leftist protestors. Quickly following the *Days of Rage* Nixon’s head of the Selective Service Board pushed local draft offices to re-evaluate the draft deferral forms of all students who were seen protesting.⁸² The most visible moment undertaken by Nixon to undermine the SDS was his famous *Silent Majority* speech. The speech came as a direct reaction to the *Days of Rage* as well as the *Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam*.⁸³ In the speech Nixon called on the American people to unite in support of the United States. In a clear deviation of true support of the South Vietnamese, Nixon said, “...to you, the great silent majority of my fellow Americans – I ask for your support. Let us be united for peace. Let us be united against defeat. Because let us understand: North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States. Only Americans can do that.”⁸⁴ The significance of this excerpt is multilayered, as it exemplifies both his views on the complex makeup of American people and his motivations and policy concerning Vietnam.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Lytle, *Uncivil Wars*, Pg. 348.

⁸³ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, (New York; Viking Books, 1983) Pg. 599-600., The Moratorium was a peaceful movement which was to begin as a strike, then continue on to a march on the White House. It was widely successful and had supporters across the world.

⁸⁴ Richard M. Nixon, “Silent Majority”, Speech, Oval Office, Washington D.C., November 3, 1969.

The term *Silent Majority* existed prior to Nixon's use in his famous speech. In fact, Vice President Spiro Agnew used the term in a speech directed at leftist protestors in May of 1969. Agnew said, "It is time for America's silent majority to stand up of its rights, and let us remember the American majority includes every minority. America's silent majority are bewildered by irrational protest..."⁸⁵ This statement was meant to be a rallying cry to the Centrist and Right-wing Americans to unify against the problematic and "potentially dangerous" leftist. By claiming that anyone who was not a leftist was in the *Silent Majority* the Nixon Administration was able to unify a large group of people against a common enemy. When Nixon used the term in his speech in November 1969, he followed the term by saying that the only ones who could humiliate the United States was Americans. In saying this Nixon told the unified center-right that not only were the Leftist causing problems domestically, such as the *Days of Rage*, protests, and strikes, but they were tarnishing the American image on a World stage. This increased the divide between the Leftist and the center-right, furthering the belief that Leftists, namely the SDS, were radicals. This further isolated the SDS from the general public and prevented the spread of their valid political message. By subtly linking the SDS to fears already held by many Americans, Nixon was able to undermine their mission on a wider public scale.

The second notable element to Nixon's speech was his discussion of his foreign policy concerning Vietnam. In the speech Nixon holds steadfast to his Vietnamization policy, once again saying that this policy was the only way to achieve "peace with honor".⁸⁶ At the beginning of his speech Nixon claimed that his reason for not allowing the immediate withdrawal of American troops was that in doing this South Vietnam would fall. He continued to appear

⁸⁵ William Safire, *Safire's Political Dictionary*, (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2008) Pg. 660.

⁸⁶ Richard M. Nixon, "Silent Majority", Speech, Oval Office, Washington D.C., November 3, 1969.

sympathetic to the South Vietnamese claiming them as “friends”.⁸⁷ This façade quickly unraveled, however, once he listed his true fear that if America retreated from Vietnam it would appear as “defeat and humiliation”.⁸⁸ Through this subtle phrasing Nixon showed that his concern was less for the South Vietnamese people, and more for his and America’s image on the global stage. Later in the speech Nixon would once again discuss the need for American unification. Nixon claimed that “the more divided we are at home, the less likely, the enemy is to negotiate...”⁸⁹ If the North Vietnamese did not negotiate it would prevent Nixon and Kissinger’s larger foreign policy of Détente from going forward. The statement cemented Nixon reasons for opposing the SDS and the Leftist movements, as well as implicated the SDS for the continued struggle to end the Vietnam War. In this statement, Nixon positioned himself as the hero of the center-right and opposed the Leftist SDS. It was with this tone that Nixon would end the year with an increased approval rating, as well as support for both his War in Vietnam and his domestic struggle against the SDS.⁹⁰

On a larger scale, the Silent Majority speech signified the joining of the three actors in this story. While Nixon’s representation in the speech is evident, as it is his proselytizing, the other two actors, the SDS and the FBI, emerge as well. In Nixon’s overt opposition to the Leftists, and grandstanding against them, He not only implicates SDS for actions taken by groups such as the Weathermen, but he further turns public sentiment against the students. The appearance of the FBI in the speech is much more subtle, however, no less important. By turning the public against the Leftist organizations, Nixon opened a justification for the actions of the

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Gallup Inc. (1975). *Richard Nixon Job Approval Rating Set* [Data set]. Retrieved from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/116677/presidential-approval-ratings-gallup-historical-statistics-trends.aspx>.

FBI. He positioned the FBI as not only the “keepers of the peace” domestically but placed them as the saviors of the American reputation overseas. In this way, the Silent Majority speech laid the groundwork for what would become an incredibly violent and tumultuous conclusion to the era of 60’s social protest.

Chapter 3 – 1970-71

Winter

With the *Silent Majority* speech, President Nixon drew a line in the sand. There were now clearly defined sides to the War at Home. This was part of Nixon's divisive politics, as it divided the voters into either being part of the Silent Majority and the solution or allied with the SDS and part of the problem. Nixon desperately wanted to present a united American front going into 1970. The purpose of presenting a united front would be to gain a stronger bargaining position for the ongoing negotiations with North Vietnam. This would be hugely important as the negotiations between North Vietnamese Politoburo member Le Duc Tho and American National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger were falling into a stalemate in late 1969.¹ According to the Gallop poll taking right after the Silent Majority Speech in November of 1969, Nixon's approval rating jumped ten points to a 65 percent approval rating.² Nixon's plan seemed to work. Nixon's division of the American people with his "silent majority" speech further marginalized the SDS and discredited their political message of peace at any cost, as Nixon was still advocating his Peace with Honor policy.

After the Silent Majority speech in November of 1969, the SDS were a shadow of what they once were, not quite ready to give up the fight, however, unsure of what the next steps entailed. Their once thriving national leadership had broken down, and now the organization was made up largely of splinter groups spread across the country. This weakened state made it easier for the FBI to continue their infiltration and dismantling of the SDS.³ Consistent with the foreign

¹ Meghan Phillips-Smith, "How Not to Win a War: Reflections on the Objectives of Nixon and Kissinger during the Final Years of the Vietnam War", (Dalhousie University, 2018).

² Gallup Inc. (1975). *Richard Nixon Job Approval Rating Set* [Data set]. Retrieved from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/116677/presidential-approval-ratings-gallup-historical-statistics-trends.aspx>.

³ It should be noted that by this point that the SDS was no longer a unified group, and many factions went by new names such as the Progressive Labour Party and the Revolutionary Youth Movement, however, the FBI and Nixon

policy of Détente, it was Nixon's hope that the decline of the left would make America appear unified around the values laid out in his "silent majority" speech, including national pride and family, which he anticipated would give them a better negotiating position with the North Vietnamese and other Communist countries.⁴ However, Nixon's vision of a unified American front did not come to fruition in 1970, as the SDS, while weakened, remained active.

As the SDS became weaker and more fractured at the end of 1969, their larger national protests followed suit. However, while the nation-wide operations slowed, the SDS remained active during the winter of 1970 operating individual operations. This fracturing of the organization meant that there was no longer a centralized leadership to govern and monitor the actions of the local level groups. While it might be assumed that the SDS would become more docile following the collapse of their national leadership and their vilification by the "silent majority", the opposite in fact occurred.

The actions of the president angered many Americans especially the SDS. That flame that was further fanned by the assassination of SDS ally and Chicago Chairman of the Black Panther Party, Fred Hampton.⁵ You may ask, what does the murder of a prominent member of the Black Panthers have to do with foreign policy or in fact the SDS? In this case, Hampton's murder reignited anger and protests from Leftist movements, including the SDS, whom were friends of Hampton. On December 3, 1969, after teaching a course on political science at a local Chicago church, Hampton had dinner with other BBP members including William O'Neal. O'Neal had been arrested on drug possession charges earlier that year and had been turned into an FBI

still referred to them all as SDS in reports. Due to this, and for the sake of clarity, I will continue to refer to the various factions as part of the SDS. The exception to this is if the documents themselves denote a difference.

⁴ Richard M. Nixon, "Silent Majority", Speech, Oval Office, Washington D.C., November 3, 1969.

⁵ Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Boston; South End Press, 1988) Pg. 69-70.

informant. After cooking dinner, O’Neal slipped a sleep agent, secobarbital, into Hampton’s food causing him to sleep heavily.⁶ At 4 am FBI agents raided Hampton’s apartment, dragging his nine-month pregnant fiancée out of bed. At this point Hampton was still unconscious due to the medication. In court documents it was reported that fellow BBP member, Harold Bell, heard the following interaction between police officers,

“That’s Fred Hampton.”

“Is he dead? ... Bring him out”

“He’s barely alive”

“He’ll make it”

Two-gun shots

“He’s good and dead now.”⁷

The gruesome and targeted murder of Hampton spurred on both the predominantly peaceful SDS and the radical Weather Underground. In the aftermath of Hampton’s murder, the Weather Underground bombed numerous police vehicles and Bill Ayers released a “Declaration of War” against the American government.⁸ While the actions taken by the Weather Underground were of the same nature as those in the *Days of Rage*, this time they were supported by a large portion of the now decentralized SDS.⁹ This support would begin to shape how the SDS factions went on to conduct protests into 1970.

⁶ The amount of secobarbital in Hampton’s symptom was nearly enough for an overdose, FBI, *COINTELPRO/Fred Hampton*, Fred Hampton Part 2 of 2, Pg. 13. FBI: Vault, 2011

<https://vault.fbi.gov/Fred%20Hampton/Fred%20Hampton%20Part%202%20of%202/view>, (July 21, 2020).

⁷ Churchill and Vander Wall cited court transcripts of *Iberia Hampton, et al. vs. Plaintiffs-Appellants, v Edward V. Hanrahan, et al., Defendants-Appellees* (Nos. 77-1969, 77-1210 and 77-1370)

⁸ Ron Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew: A History of the Weather Underground*, (New York; Verso, 1997). Pg. 64.

⁹ Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS: The rise and development of the Students for a Democratic Society, the organization that became the major expression of the American left in the sixties- its passage from student protest to institutional resistance to revolutionary activism, and its ultimate impact on American politics and life* (New York; Random House, 1973). Pg. 630.

While in most cases the decentralized factions of the SDS returned to the roots of the organization by holding peaceful protests on University campuses, many took up Bill Ayers declaration of war.¹⁰ In fact in the 1969-1970 academic year over 9400 protests were reported on campuses across the United States.¹¹ Unfortunately, some members of the SDS were influenced by the actions of the Weather Underground and anger over the murder of Fred Hampton, and began to incorporate more violent actions into their protests. This was done in response to the violence experienced at the hands of the police, such as was seen with Fred Hampton. According to FBI files, the rise in violence was not surprising as the FBI still believed that the Weather Underground and the SDS were intrinsically linked despite the evidence that the two organizations intentionally did not interact.¹² The violence at these protests manifested largely in property damage, reported by the FBI to have occurred at 410 protests. Additionally, physical violence was reported at 230 protests.¹³ According to many in the SDS, corroborated by Weathermen leader Bill Ayers, the new violent tactics of the SDS were a reflection of their treatment by police and the FBI, especially following the ‘assassination’ of Fred Hampton. The SDS claimed that the police were acting overly aggressive against students, resulting in injuries.

These claims were supported by the actions of the police at protests in the winter of 1970, such as the February protest at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB). There, members of the local SDS faction, held a meeting and small protest, which devolved into a violent protest with the involvement of other alleged “students”. This event later became known as the first of the Isla Vista Riots.¹⁴ On February 25, 1970, UCSB students crowded Harder

¹⁰ Sale, *SDS*, Pg. 632

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, Chicago, Pg. 22. FBI: Vault, 2011 <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-chicago-part-01-of-01/view>, (July 13, 2020).

¹³ Sale, *SDS*, Pg. 633

¹⁴ New York Times, *The Isla Vista War – Campus Violence in a Class by Itself*, August 30, 1970.

Stadium in Isla Vista to hear a speech by the Chicago Seven's lawyer William Kunstler.¹⁵ Kunstler spoke about his opposition to the Vietnam War, as well as the threats the local and federal government posed to liberty.¹⁶ At the end of his speech, students began to leave the stadium and were met with police. Police arrested Kunstler as well as other local SDS leaders. It is here that the narrative becomes cloudy as SDS members and other students claimed that the police began clubbing students who were leaving the stadium, and the police claim they were acting in self defence.¹⁷ Regardless of who struck the first blow, the tensions boiled over and the situation turned into a full riot. Cyrus Godfrey, the station manager of the UCSB radio station said, "There had been a lot of student protests against the Vietnam War. Richard Nixon was very antagonistic towards students. That set a bad atmosphere."¹⁸ This sentiment from Godfrey makes it clear that the actions of the protestors were a direct reaction to their treatment by the government, specifically Nixon.

The protest grew more and more violent as it swept across the quiet community of Isla Vista. As the SDS protesters ran away from the police violence at the stadium, an alleged group of "students" began to congregate at the Perfect Park.¹⁹ The park happened to be located beside the Isla Vista Branch of Bank of America. These "students" began to throw rocks at the bank saying that, "It was a symbol of capitalism and 'the establishment'".²⁰ The violence against the bank and its surrounding police officers began to increase as the day wore on. At one point a police car was flipped and set on fire.²¹ At 7 pm a dumpster was set on fire, allowing "students"

¹⁵ Isla Vista is a small community beside UCSB

¹⁶ "Remembering the Isla Vista Riots", *Santa Barbara Independent*, April 22, 2010

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ *KCRW (Radio Station)*, "UCSB Students remember 50th anniversary of Isla Vista's Bank of America Burning", Feb 24, 2020.

¹⁹ The name is based off of the Peoples Park at Berkley.

²⁰ *KCRW (Radio Station)*, "UCSB Students remember 50th anniversary of Isla Vista's Bank of America Burning", Feb 24, 2020.

²¹ Ibid.

to enter the bank and loot it.²² The violence became so out of hand that the then California Governor Ronald Reagan, instituted a curfew and sent in the National Guard to maintain order.²³ While the actions of the “students” were undeniably terrible and destructive, identifying the ‘students’ were questioned upon the revelation of COINTELPRO.

In the aftermath of Nixon’s *Silent Majority* speech faith in the government was strong.²⁴ Additionally, public animosity towards the SDS was high. The support of the government and the police were so strong that after Hampton’s brutal murder, the general public intrinsically believed the report released to the *Chicago Tribune* by States Attorney Edward Hanrahan. In the article “Exclusive – Hanrahan, Police Tell Panther Story”, Hanrahan provided pictures supporting his claim that the BBP members were firing at the police, including pictures of bullet holes in door jams and curtains. Strategically, any pictures showing where the police bullets hit, including where Hampton was killed, were left out of the article.²⁵ Similar articles emerged in the aftermath of the Isla Vista Riot, with news sources claiming that the SDS were instigating an event akin to the “Russian Revolution”.²⁶

The media coverage of the Isla Vista Riot in February of 1970 reported that the perpetrators of the violence were undeniably students from UCSB, specifically members of the SDS.²⁷ However, in the COINTELPRO documents released during the Church Committee hearings, revealed a different story. In the FBI file from February 9, 1970, approximately two

²² Ibid.

²³ Winthrop Griffith, “The Isla Vista War – Campus Violence in a Class by Itself”, *New York Times*, August 30, 1970.

²⁴ Gallup Inc. (1975). *Richard Nixon Job Approval Rating Set* [Data set]. Retrieved from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/116677/presidential-approval-ratings-gallup-historical-statistics-trends.aspx>.

²⁵ *Chicago Tribune*, “Exclusive- Hanrahan, Police Tell Panther Story”. (1969), The pictures incriminating the Police would not be released until later when a Grand Jury was held to determine if the police acted fairly.

²⁶ Sale, *SDS*, Pg. 633

²⁷ “Remembering the Isla Vista Riots”, *Santa Barbara Independent*, April 22, 2010

weeks before the Isla Vista Riot, a “potential counterintelligence action” is proposed saying, “[the] Office continues to furnish the police department information at any time such information can result in the arrest of members of the various groups listed above, where they can be implicated in illegal activity.”²⁸ While this phrasing could have opened up the possibility of plausible deniability for the FBI, a former FBI agent, Cril Payne, in his book *Deep Cover: an FBI Agent Infiltrates the Radical Underground*, claimed that the FBI was very active in Santa Barbara, and that the alleged “students” were in fact operatives in COINTELPRO.²⁹ The intention of the infiltration by the FBI was to further turn the public on the SDS, painting them as a violent degenerate group with no redeeming factors. The actions by the police and the FBI in the first of the Isla Vista Riots marked a turn to an overt style of dismantling of the SDS. This new overt antagonism by the police was unsurprising considering the public sentiment against the SDS and other leftist movements. Articles encouraged the belief that the police were acting in defence of the public against the brutality of the Leftists. Seeing the public support of actions against the SDS and BBP, the FBI and police continued to increase their actions against the SDS in a more overt fashion.

The overt and brutal actions of the FBI and police during the Isla Vista Riot were the first of many that became a hallmark of COINTELPRO. In a report by the FBI field office in Chicago it was noted that

The major thrust of counterintelligence activity of the Chicago division is being directed against the Students for a Democratic Society. As previously applied tactics of embarrassment, degradation, and fictional splits do not seem to be pertinent to and

²⁸ FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, San Diego, Pg. 11. FBI: Vault, 2011, <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-san-diego-part-01-of-01/view>, (July 13, 2020).

²⁹ Cril Payne, *Deep Cover: and FBI Agent Infiltrates the Radical Underground*, (New York; W.W. Norton and Company, 1979). Pg. 145.

organization of this group, the primary tactic being applied is the development of prosecutable federal or local cases against the members of this group.³⁰

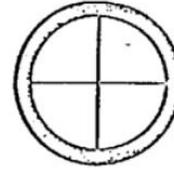
As noted by the officer, the traditional tactics used in previous years appeared to have little to no effect on the newly divided SDS. This meant that the FBI needed to find new and innovative ways to control and suppress the still vocal movement. As can be seen in this report, and as corroborated by the actions taken in Isla Vista, the FBI implicated the SDS for larger and larger crimes.

In February 1970, four days after the events in Isla Vista the FBI field office in San Antonio proposed targeting the SDS branch at the University of Texas San Antonio. Unlike in the operation in California, the FBI in Texas would not pose as a faction of the SDS in San Antonio, but rather one of their largest opponents in the region, the ultra right-wing group the Minutemen. The intention of this was to force the SDS into retaliatory action for which they could be arrested and discredited. Prior to the operation the FBI field office sent a leaflet to the San Antonio Committee for Peace and Freedom, the branch of the local SDS chapter which sponsored weekly protests. This leaflet was depicted as being from the Minutemen issued the following threat,

³⁰ FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, Chicago Part 1, Pg. 22. FBI: Vault, 2011 <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-chicago-part-01-of-01/view>, (July 13, 2020).

"TRAITORS BEWARE

"See the old man at the corner where you buy your papers? He may have a silencer equipped pistol under his coat. That extra fountain pen in the pocket of the insurance salesman who calls on you might be a cyanide gas gun. What about your milkman? Arsenic works slow but sure. Your auto mechanic may stay up nights studying booby traps. These patriots are not going to let you take their freedom away from them. They have learned the silent knife, the strangler's cord, the target rifle that hits sparrows at 200 yards. Traitors beware. Even now the cross hairs are on the back of your necks.



TRAITORS BEWARE

See the old man at the corner where you buy your papers? He may have a silencer equipped pistol under his coat. That extra fountain pen in the pocket of the insurance salesman who calls on you might be a cyanide gas gun. What about your milk man? Arsenic works slow but sure. Your auto mechanic may stay up nights studying booby traps. These patriots are not going to let you take their freedom away from them. They have learned the silent knife, the strangler's cord, the target rifle that hits sparrows at 200 yards. Traitors beware. Even now the cross hairs are on the back of your necks.

MINUTEMEN

FIGURE 1 – FBI, *COINTELPRO/NEW LEFT, SAN ANTONIO PART 1, PG. 60*. FBI: VAULT, 2011
[HTTPS://VAULT.FBI.GOV/COINTEL-PRO/NEW-LEFT/COINTEL-PRO-NEW-LEFT-SAN-ANTONIO-PART-01-OF-01/VIEW](https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-san-antonio-part-01-of-01/view), (JUNE 7, 2020).

Additionally, the leaflets had cross hairs on them, to further drive home the SDS as a target of the far right. Another incentive the FBI had to use the Minutemen as the inciting party was that if the SDS were to retaliate, it would ensure police intervention. This was because the leader of the Minutemen strike team in San Antonio was a police officer with the San Antonio police department. The SDS in the San Antonio area was known by the FBI to be at odds with the Minutemen and the police, so any action would be not unexpected. The overall goal of this was to disrupt the anti-war protests and completely discredit the SDS in San Antonio.³¹ However, when this proposal was sent to the FBI head office in Washington it was denied as they believed that it would do more to discredit the Minutemen than the SDS.³²

In San Diego, the FBI and police were harassing another faction of the SDS. Two former members of the SDS in San Diego, their names were redacted, moved to a commune in late 1969 and began publishing an underground newspaper called the *San Diego Street Journal*. The

³¹ FBI, *COINTELPRO/NEW LEFT, SAN ANTONIO PART 1, PG. 60-61*. FBI: VAULT, 2011
[HTTPS://VAULT.FBI.GOV/COINTEL-PRO/NEW-LEFT/COINTEL-PRO-NEW-LEFT-SAN-ANTONIO-PART-01-OF-01/VIEW](https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-san-antonio-part-01-of-01/view), (JUNE 7, 2020).

³² *Ibid.* Pg. 62

journal itself was incredibly critical of both local and federal policing, regularly reporting on the transgressions of the San Diego Police department and the FBI. The FBI obtained a copy of the journal and sent it to the San Diego Police with the hopes that they would target the commune. In a report by the San Diego FBI office, an agent noted that the journal was effectively inhibited as,

[The San Diego Street Journal] has been subject to considerable harassment... This includes breaking into both their offices with considerable destruction of machines and equipment, items being thrown or shot through windows and doors of offices of the newspaper and commune itself, the theft of 2500 copies of the San Diego Street Journal, the burning of an automobile parked in front of the commune, and many other harassing incidents such as threatening telephone calls, theft of records, etcetera.³³

In a later report confirming FBI involvement, an agent wrote that

violent counterintelligence action such as breaking windows in homes and offices has been taken against radical groups in San Diego for some time... [the San Diego Office] continues to watch for opportunities to frustrate these groups through the passing on of intelligence information and through possible means which might interfere with their financial situation...³⁴

These actions were intended to both discredit the SDS in the eyes for the public and tarnish their reputation as lease holders. By accomplishing this it made it harder for the SDS factions to congregate. The campaigns against the SDS seen in Isla Vista, San Antonio and San Diego were also occurring across the United States in early 1970 as the FBI rushed to further quiet the resilient SDS and achieve Nixon's unified front.³⁵

The question is then, why did Nixon feel the need to squash the SDS? Nixon believed that by suppressing the SDS America would be able to present a united front. Whether this was a valid belief or not became irrelevant, as Nixon's belief that it was true gave the idea of Student

³³ FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, San Diego, Pg. 14. FBI: Vault, 2011, <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-san-diego-part-01-of-01/view>, (June 4, 2020).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Pg. 11.

³⁵ FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, Cleveland, Pg. 23. FBI: Vault, 2011, <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-cleveland-part-01-of-01/view>, (June 4, 2020). , FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, Detroit, Pg. 5. FBI: Vault, 2011, <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-detroit-part-01-of-01/view>, (June 4, 2020)., FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, Boston, Pg. 30. FBI: Vault, 2011, <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-boston-part-01-of-01/view>, (June 4, 2020).

Movement power over Nixon's actions. To Nixon, it was important that America appear to have a solid unified base as the progress he and Kissinger had hoped to see with their policy of Détente had largely come to a stand still. The negotiations between Kissinger and the North Vietnamese Politoburo member, Le Duc Tho, had remained tense and unproductive. In a memorandum of a conversation between Le Duc Tho and Kissinger in Paris in February of 1970, Kissinger pointed out that, "It is difficult to decide what we are trying to achieve: and even agreeing on that, it is hard then to do it...the North Vietnamese have a long history of not being easy to negotiate with."³⁶ The tensions between the North Vietnamese and the United States ran so deep that both sides could not come to a agreement as to what issues needed to be addressed, much less any type of solution. It was clear that the negotiations would take longer than either Kissinger or Nixon had planned. While prior to the start of the negotiations Kissinger believed that with his political acumen and academic prowess these negotiations would be swift and favour the United States, upon meeting with Le Duc Tho, those beliefs quickly changed. To negotiate from a position of power America had to appear to be powerful, which meant presenting a unified front.

Later in the meeting, Le Duc Tho commented to Kissinger that the North Vietnamese belief in the United States was incredibly low both due to their shared history during the Indochina war, but also due to the fact that President Nixon could not appear to keep his own house in order. To this Kissinger replied, "But in the last election, the big bloc of votes which could make a difference was not on the left but on the right. Last October, when there had been a public opinion problem, the President moved towards these votes."³⁷ This comment was a

³⁶ Unknown, "Memorandum of Conversation, Paris, February 21, 1970, 9:40 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.," FRUS 1969-1976, Volume XLII, Vietnam: The Kissinger-Le Duc Tho Negotiations. Document 2. Pg. 15., To the quip it was noted that Le Duc Tho looked disapproving.

³⁷ Ibid. Pg. 17

reference to the *Days of Rage* and Nixon's subsequent Silent Majority speech. Kissinger essentially told Le Duc Tho, that due to Nixon's actions, America was unifying under his political platform. Kissinger went on to say that "the President can appeal to people whom President Johnson could not reach."³⁸ After Kissinger's assurance that Nixon was respected and admired domestically, the negotiations moved forward with both parties on temporarily even footing.

Spring

Where the winter of 1970 was carecterized by its violent clashes and increasasingling blatant police action, the following spring saw a rise in more subtle means of subverison by the FBI. This is not to say that the actions were any less corrupt or illegal, but rather they no longer appeared in the headlines of the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*. This shift from a aggressive supression to a subtle one could be seen in the FBI actions in Houston Texas. A year before the FBI had launched a aggressive campaign to allienate the SDS against their pro-union supporters, a tactic that had ended with the SDS being removed as a student organization at several universitys around Texas, as well as maid headlines in the *Houston Couger*. To further supress the student movement in Texas, while also avoiding public scruitny, the Houston field office began planning in the winter of 1970 for implement subversion tactics in the spring. In February of 1970 an agent noted that, "Efforts are currently being made to implant two additional informants...if this is sucessful it appears that their activities can be controlled and specific counterintelligence moves made."³⁹ This got the ball rolling in regards to the new subtle subversion which would come to fruition in the spring. In a report from April of 1970 the

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, Houston, Pg. 69. FBI: Vault, 2011, <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-houston-part-01-of-01/view>, (June 20, 2020).

planned infiltration of the SDS was deemed a success with an FBI agent writing, “Houston had developed a well placed informant in the group who is scheduled to host the leaders for a barbecue and beer party at his residence. The informant intends to furnish these individuals with substantial alcoholic beverages in order to get them drunk in an effort to obtain pertinent information to the investigation of the SDS and its members.”⁴⁰ These actions meant that a person in the employ of the FBI intentionally intoxicated members of a legal social movement with the hope of implicating its members in crimes or activities which would warrant investigation and punitive action. This was done through informants as a means to provide plausible deniability to the FBI as well as reduce the media attention towards the actions of the FBI against students.

That spring, the FBI also launched less publicly visible financial attacks against the SDS. In the winter of 1970 Nixon had authorized the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to target leftist movements to revoke tax exemptions and financial aid. The new tax code was worded so that it would intentionally only affect groups such as the SDS and the BPP, by adding additional restriction for not for profit organizations, including preventing them from publishing political writings, having any paid positions, or receiving donations above a certain cap.⁴¹ Additionally, if a group was seen to be protesting or undertaking political actions, it was flagged by the IRS for auditing.⁴² While the interference by the IRS was technically legal, the IRS was further used as a tool by the FBI to target and dismantle SDS targets. In a memo from a FBI agent, whose name was redacted, in San Francisco on April 30, 1970, it was noted that the FBI was forwarding the IRS a list of targets including a local faction of the SDS, who were operating under the name

⁴⁰ Ibid. Pg. 71

⁴¹ The donation cap appeared to be arbitrary and based on the individual case.

⁴² Eileen Shanahan, “An Explanation: The Allegations Nixon’s I.R.S. Interference”, *New York Times*, June 14, 1974.

New Mobilization Committee. This list contained the political activities of the organizations, any of the published works, all employees, and any payments made in support of the political organization, including the democratic party.⁴³ At a later point it was noted by another agent, whose name was also redacted, that the FBI also provided the social security numbers of various members of these organizations to the IRS. The IRS then went on to audit not only the various SDS factions, but individual members and supporters of the organizations. If any audits came back with misfilings, or inconsistencies, the individuals were often persecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Occasionally, if a individual was deemed useful, they were offered a plea bargain in exchange for becoming an FBI informant.⁴⁴

The tactic of offering clemency in exchange for information or future help was not new to the FBI. This tried and true tactic had been used against William O'Neal, the informant who drugged Fred Hampton. It was believed by the FBI that if the informant was already an established member of the organization, then the turn around to gain incriminating evidence or even pressuring the groups to more and more drastic actions would be quicker. Additionally, this would add an extra layer of plausible deniability for the FBI, as the informant would have no prior connections to the Bureau. This tactic was at the center of the FBI tactics in the early spring of 1970.

Even as the FBI stepped up their attacks on the SDS, SDS factions retreated from large scale protests and events. One of the reasons for this was that following the large-scale police action many leaders had been arrested or split from the organization such as Abbie Hoffman and

⁴³ FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, San Francisco Part 3, Pg. 15. FBI: Vault, 2011, <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-san-francisco-part-03-of-03/view>, (June 20, 2020).

⁴⁴ FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, New York Part 2 of 2, Pg. 2-5. FBI: Vault, 2011, <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-new-york-part-01-of-02-1/view>, (June 20, 2020).

Tom Hayden.⁴⁵ This left a leadership void in the factions, causing infighting and disorganization. As a result, no one could effectively organize marches or protests. This was the case in many factions including those in Richmond Virginia, San Antonio, and Baltimore. Another element in the de-escalation of the student protests was Nixon's implementation of lottery system of draft.⁴⁶ Prior to this the draft system was based on merit and targeted choosing. This meant that a potential draftee was judged and selected based on their job, social status, and potential domestic benefit or detriment. This resulted in most of those drafted being Black, lower class, or vocal anti-war activists, as there was no transparency to the draft system. This allowed the draft to be used as a tool to suppress perceived threats to a unified American front. One such target for the draft was John Fogerty, the lead singer of the rock band Creedence Clearwater Revival, and vocal anti-war spokesperson. Fogerty said of this system, "So, it was the Vietnam War going on... Now I was drafted and they're making me fight, and no one has actually defined why. So, this was all boiling inside of me, and I sat down on the edge of my bed and out came 'It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no senator's son!'"⁴⁷ This line would go on to inspire the band's song *Fortunate Son*, which would become an anthem of the Student Movement.

Nixon's new proposed system of a lottery meant that all potential draftees were entered into a random draw and awarded a ticket number, rather than being specifically selected. The perception of this was that the draft would be egalitarian and therefore no longer disproportionately target leftist or minorities. Under the new system, the higher the number of

⁴⁵ FBI, *COINTELPRO/New Left*, Richmond 1969, Pg. 51. FBI: Vault, 2011, <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-richmond-part-01-of-01/view>, (June 20, 2020).

⁴⁶ Mark Hamilton Lytle, *America's Uncivil Wars; the Sixties Era from Elvis to the Fall of Richard Nixon*, (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2006). Pg. 352.

⁴⁷ Jon Blistein, "John Fogerty: It's 'Confounding' that Trump Played 'Fortunate Son' at Rally", *Rolling Stone*, September 11, 2020.

the draft ticket, the less likely someone was to be sent to Vietnam.⁴⁸ This system was not perfect however, as people who were chosen could defer the draft for reasons such as essential work domestically, or medical approved reasons, such as bone spurs, as was the case with President Donald J. Trump. The legitimacy of these claims is questionable however, as all that was need for verification was a doctor's note, which could be purchased by those with the financial ability to do so. Despite its failings, the lottery policy temporarily appeased a large section of SDS supporters as it was more egalitarian and that the president was listening to the complaints of the students. Those who were appeased by this new draft system were largely those who did not subscribe to some of the SDS and its factions more radical ideas. Without the support of a large student body the large-scale protests held by the SDS began to disband. With fewer protests and a quieter opposition, Nixon no longer felt the need to end the Vietnam War as quickly.⁴⁹

This softening of a withdrawal timeline could be seen in the negotiations between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho. In a meeting on April 4, 1970 in Paris, Kissinger told Le Duc Tho that "There is no sense in another meeting unless [the North Vietnamese] were prepared to say something new."⁵⁰ In his personal account of the negotiations, Kissinger wrote, "unless we [the United States] change our position, there was nothing more to discuss."⁵¹ As the negotiations were at yet another stalemate, Kissinger and Nixon knew that a new tactic was needed to further their goal of "peace with honor". As Nixon believed that he had successfully quelled the domestic dissent of the war, specifically the SDS factions, he saw no issue with undertaking a

⁴⁸ While these seemed egalitarian, evidence of corruption has come out since.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Unknown, "Memorandum of Conversation, Paris, April 4, 1970, 9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m." FRUS 1969-1976, Volume XLII, Vietnam: The Kissinger-Le Duc Tho Negotiations. Document 5. Pg. 15.

⁵¹ Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1979), Pg. 446.

new and drastic military action to force the hand of the North Vietnamese.⁵² Unbeknown to him, these actions would bring the peace he found domestically to a screaming halt.

On April 30th, 1970 Nixon announced his plan to force the North Vietnamese to the negotiation table. In his speech Nixon pointed out a loophole in the planned withdrawal he had previously set out, regarding the protection of American lives. The central element to this plan was the invasion of Cambodia, a small peaceful country neighbouring Vietnam. Nixon told the American public,

Ten days ago, in my report to the nation on Vietnam, I announced a decision to withdraw an additional 150,000 Americans from Vietnam over the next year. I said then that I was making that decision despite our concern over the increased enemy activity in Laos and Cambodia, and in South Vietnam. At that time, I warned that if I concluded that increased enemy activity in any of these areas endangered the lives of Americans remaining in Vietnam, I would not hesitate to take a strong and effective measures to deal with that situation. Despite that warning, North Vietnam has increased its military aggression in all these areas, and particularly Cambodia...to protect our men who are in Vietnam and to guarantee the continued success of our withdrawal and Vietnamization programs, I have concluded the time has come for action.⁵³

In phrasing the call to action as preventing the, “endanger[ing of] the lives of Americans remaining in Vietnam...”, Nixon maintained his position of only acting out of the necessity of the American people.⁵⁴ He placed the onus of the invasion of Cambodia on the North Vietnamese, and particularly their lack compromise in the ongoing negotiations. Nixon claimed that Cambodia was aiding the North through providing sanctuaries for Viet Cong troops. He claimed that these sanctuaries were of concern as they allowed for unanticipated attacks on American troops.

⁵² Richard Nixon, RN: The Memoires of Richard Nixon, (New York; Warner Books, 1979), Pg. 234.

⁵³ “Ten days ago, in my report”: PPP139, April 30, 1970; In. Jonathan Schell, *The Time of Illusions* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), pg. 88.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Nixon saw his plans for Cambodia as parallel to the battle he was facing domestically with the SDS. In a draft of a speech written six days before he declared the invasion, Nixon stated,

My fellow Americans, we live in an age of anarchy, both abroad and at home... We see mindless attacks on all great institutions which have been created by free civilizations in the last five hundred years. Even here in the States, great universities are being systematically destroyed. Small nations all over the world find themselves under attack from within and without.⁵⁵

Nixon's comparison between the military war in Vietnam and the political war domestically, completely intertwined the two conflicts. It was apparent that Nixon believed that to be victorious on one battlefield, he needed to be victorious on both. This additionally positioned the student movement as an enemy on par with the Viet Cong. Essentially, they were a threat to American life and liberty. Nixon hoped that through his phrasing of the invasion announcement he would be able to force the North to compromise on their demands, while maintaining a peaceful domestic political climate.⁵⁶ These hopes were in vain as the battered and bruised student movement came out against the invasion of Cambodia in full force.

Within hours of Nixon's speech, the once pacified SDS factions and their supporters came out in full force holding protests across the United States. At Yale University, student leaders held a mass protest in the center of Hartford Connecticut, calling for a national student strike.⁵⁷ This war cry was taken up across the country with over 60 other university campuses taking part. Of these campuses over three dozen held protests, with several them becoming violent. One of these campuses was Kent State in Ohio.

⁵⁵ Richard Reeves, *President Nixon: Alone in the White House* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001) Pg. 216.

⁵⁶ Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America*, (New York; Scribner, 2008) Pg. 477.

⁵⁷ Sale, *SDS*, Pg. 635.

Kent State

Kent State had been a hotbed of political strife since early in 1969, long before Nixon's declaration of the invasion of Cambodia. The SDS factions and the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) were constantly at odds about the presence of the ROTC, a military organization, on a university campus. Starting in 1969, there was a movement to remove the ROTC building from campus, arguing that the military had no place in a university. While vocal, the tension between these two groups was relatively contained to the groups themselves. While tense Kent was far from being the most turbulent campus, in nearby Ohio State, the National Guard constantly patrolled to control protest.⁵⁸ In the late winter and early spring of 1970, with Nixon's new draft policy and the relative quiet in Vietnam War policy, the SDS and like minded student organizations became quiet and relatively pacified by Nixon's band-aid solutions. This calm ended abruptly in May of 1970.

Three things happened in late April 1970 which would reinvigorate the student movement. The first was the release of the book *My Lai 4: A report on the Massacre and its Aftermath* by Seymore Hersh.⁵⁹ In the book, Hersh chronicled the events in 1968 which led to the horrific My Lai massacre and the massacre itself, where between 347 and 504 unarmed South Vietnamese civilians were slaughtered by American troops.⁶⁰ The horrific detail in which Hersh recounted the story was sickening to the American public. The disclosure of the atrocities at My Lai led to a vigil being held in Washington D.C. attended by a quarter of a million people. Additionally, people demanded charges be brought against Major General Samuel W. Koster,

⁵⁸ Perlstein, *Nixonland*, Pg. 480

⁵⁹ Seymore Hersh, *My Lai 4: A report on the Massacre and its Aftermath*, (New York; Random House, 1970).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* Pg. 2.

who approved of the attack.⁶¹ To make matters worse, Hersh additionally wrote on the attempted coverup of the massacre by the American government. This book on its own did not restart the protests, however it did make students question Nixon's rhetoric of destroying "enemy Sanctuaries".⁶²

The second event, which held the gaze of the nation, was the protests at Yale University regarding the trail of Black Panther Party leaders Bobby Seal and Huey Newton. In a speech at a faculty assembly, the Yale patrician president, Kingsman Brewster said, "I am appalled and ashamed that things should have come to a pass that I am skeptical of the ability of black revolutionaries to achieve a fair trial anywhere in the United States."⁶³ To raise money for the trial the BBP hosted fundraisers at Yale, supported by Brewster. 15,000 people gathered in support, with 4000 troops being sent to New Haven to 'maintain the peace'.⁶⁴ The mentality of the protest was summed up as, "young people could drop out of America and become part of a new nation... New Haven wasn't a weekend thing."⁶⁵

The final moment which sparked the protests at Kent State was Nixon's declaration of the invasion of Cambodia. This would be the final straw for student protestors. Taking up the mantra that "New Haven wasn't a weekend thing", students at Kent State staged a huge protest of approximately 500 students actively protesting and many others near by attending or watching between classes.⁶⁶ The protest began on May 1, 1970, one day after Nixon declared the invasion. Students and supporters gathered in the Commons, a grassy valley area on campus, to display

⁶¹ Ian Shapira, "'It was Insanity': At My Lai, U.S. soldiers slaughtered hundreds of Vietnamese women and kids", *Washington Post*, March 16, 2018.

⁶² Perlstein, *Nixonland*, Pg. 481

⁶³ "New Haven wasn't a weekend thing." *New York Times*, May 2, 1970.

⁶⁴ Perlstein, *Nixonland*, Pg. 480

⁶⁵ "New Haven wasn't a weekend thing." *New York Times*, May 2, 1970.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, FBI, *Kent State*, Kent State Part 1 of 22, Pg. 5-7. FBI: Vault, 2010 <https://vault.fbi.gov/Kent%20State/Kent%20State%20Part%201%20of%2022/view>, (June 20, 2020).

their anger towards Nixon and the military. At this rally there was a call put out by the remaining SDS loyalist to “bring the war home”, a call that was echoed from the likes of the Weather Underground. The history students hosted a ceremony in which they buried a copy of the US Constitution to symbolize Nixon’s murder of the Constitution. Finally, a sign was nailed to a tree asking, “Why is the ROTC building still standing?”.⁶⁷ Around 1 pm, the crowd began to disperse to attend class. Plans were made at this point to hold another protest on May 4, the following Monday, to continue to show support for the anti-war movement.

Despite a new protest being scheduled, the anger seen earlier that day did not dissipate. Some of those who had gathered in the morning continued their protest into the town of Kent, where Kent State is located. As the sun set, students and their supporters walked up Water Street, a road that held many of the bars and restaurants in Kent. The protestors became more violent and destructive as the night wore on. They spray painted buildings, throw bricks at police cars, and smashed the windows of a bank.⁶⁸ Soon the police arrived and dispersed the crowd with tear gas. Rather than ending their protest there, some students returned to campus screaming, “The revolution has begun! Join us! We’re going to burn the ROTC building!”.⁶⁹ The police subdued the small number of vandals within an hour. It had appeared as though the “revolution” had been quelled.⁷⁰

The next morning, May 2, 1970, the city of Kent was in a state of confusion and fear. Business owners claimed that they had been told that if they did not display anti-war slogans their businesses would be burned down. Additionally, the police believed that students had

⁶⁷ Jerry M. Lewis; Thomas R. Hensley (Summer 1998). “The May 4 Shootings at Ken State University: The Search for Historical Accuracy”. *Ohio Council for the Social Studies Review*. 34 (1): Pg. 9–21.

⁶⁸ Perlstein, *Nixonland*, Pg. 482.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

obtained a cache of weapons to attack the ROTC building and the post office. There was also a rumor that the students had spiked the water supply with LSD, however, the origins of this rumor are unclear.⁷¹ None of these claims could be substantiated, however, the rumors did their job and the citizens of Kent began to fear the students and support police intervention. Tensions began to run so high that at 5:00 pm the National Guard was called to aid the local police. By the time the National Guard arrived, at around 10:00 pm, a large protest was already underway led by students. During the course of this protest the ROTC building had been set on fire. A later report by the FBI found that the arsonists responsible for the ROTC fire were not students, but rather violent instigators who premeditated an attack on the building.⁷² According to the FBI files on the firebombing, the instigators were not Kent State students, but rather a group from Chicago who were sympathetic to the tactics and rhetoric of the Weather Underground, who had been responsible for the bombing of the Haymarket Statue in Chicago and the Pentagon.⁷³ The National Guard set out to disperse the crowd, making some arrests, largely for curfew violations, and using tear gas. Soon after the protest ended for the night.

The following day the Governor of Ohio, Jim Rhodes, held a press conference at the fire house which responded to the ROTC fire. At the conference Rhodes angrily demanded that the students end the protest. In line with Nixon's rhetoric on the student movement, Rhodes claimed that the protestors were un-American. In his press conference Rhodes said, "We've seen here at the city of Kent especially, probably the most vicious form of campus-oriented violence yet perpetrated by dissenting groups...they make definite plans of burning, destroying, and throwing

⁷¹ Howard Means, *67 Shots: Kent State and the End of American Innocence*, (Boston; Da Capo Press, 2016). Pg. 135.

⁷² Presidential Commission on Campus Unrest. *Special Report on Kent State*, Washington D.C., 1970. Pg. 30

⁷³ FBI, *Kent State*, Kent State Part 1 of 22, Pg. 30. FBI: Vault, 2010

<https://vault.fbi.gov/Kent%20State/Kent%20State%20Part%201%20of%2022/view>, (June 20, 2020).

rocks at police and the National Guard and the Highway patrol.”⁷⁴ The insinuation in Rhodes statement was that the students were not only sole responsible for the chaos and destruction in Kent, but that the attacks were premeditated. These claims were directly in conflict with the findings from the FBI investigation, specifically, that there was no evidence that the student movement was behind the arson or violence. However, the dissemination of false information saying that the students were the cause of the violence fueled the animosity held towards the students by the people of Kent, and Nixon’s “silent majority”. By increasing the animosity towards the students, Rhodes and Nixon were able to justify the actions that would be taken against the students. While Rhodes claimed the students were destructive and violent thugs, students from Kent State descended into the town to help the clean-up efforts the morning after the chaos. The clean up efforts by the students was met by mixed reactions by the townspeople and the mayor once again declared a curfew. The curfew had little effect however, and another demonstration was held at 8 pm that evening.

At 8 pm students began to congregate on the Campus Commons in a peaceful protest. Likened to a sit-in, the students were determined to de-escalate the violence of the previous days. Despite its peaceful nature the National Guard used tear gas to disperse the crowd at 8:45 pm. Not dissuaded the students re-congregated at the main intersection in Kent, Lincoln and Main. Here they held another sit-in with the hopes of garnering a meeting with the Mayor and the University President. Once again, the students were met by the National Guard who under instruction to enforce curfew once again dispersed the crowd and forced the students back to

⁷⁴ Presidential Commission on Campus Unrest. *Special Report on Kent State*, Washington D.C., 1970. Pg. 253-254.

their dorms. During this process several students were injured by bayonets.⁷⁵ These injuries ended the third day of protests.

As a result of the events of the weekend, the Kent State administration attempted to halt the protest that had been planned for May 4th. The distributed 12,000 leaflets to the student body saying that the protest was cancelled. Their efforts were for nought however, as approximately 2,000 students gathered at the Commons. The protest began with a ceremonial ringing of the Victory Bell, followed by leaders of the Student Movement giving speeches. Nearly immediately the National Guard attempted to disperse the crowd. The National Guard drove their Jeeps into the crowd to break up the congregation. The students began to throw stones at the cars, hitting one campus patrolman, thus causing the vehicle to retreat. The National Guard then returned with tear gas, however due to wind conditions this had little effect. Instead the students began to lob the tear gas cannisters back at the National Guard. With these tactics failing the National Guard escalated their actions against the protestors.

With the “non-lethal” weapons failing to disperse the National Guard decided to take up arms against the students. 77 National Guardsmen affixed bayonets to their rifles and approached the student protestors. The new aggressive tactic drove the students from the commons and up Blanket Hill, which bordered the valley which was the Commons. The students then began to head towards Taylor Hall and the near by parking lot. Following the students, the National Guard left the Commons, however they headed towards the athletic practise field which had been locked down by the administration prior to the protest. The National Guard had

⁷⁵ Joe Eszterhas and Michael D. Roberts, *Thirteen Seconds: Confrontation at Kent State*, (New York; Gray and Company Publishers, 1970) Pg. 121. Why not read Michener?

effectively backed themselves into a corner.⁷⁶ Meanwhile the students began to congregate in front of Taylor Hall, which also happened to be in front of the trapped National Guard. Many of the students who still congregated were angry and continued to throw the tear gas canisters and stones at the National Guard. Trapped by the athletic field the National Guard marched towards the Commons. The student walked closer to look at what the Guardsmen were doing, at which point eyewitnesses said that the Guardsmen Sargent Myron Pryor turned and fired at the students with his .45 calibre pistol.⁷⁷ This triggered 29 other Guardsmen to also turn their rifles on the students. In total 67 rounds were fired into the crowd of students. The shooting was found to last 13 seconds; however, those present reported it lasting for a minuet or longer.⁷⁸ In total four students were killed; Jeffery Glenn Miller (20), Allison Beth Krause (19), William Knox Schroeder (19), and Sandra Lee Scheuer (20). Additionally, nine other students were injured by the shooting by the National Guard.

The students immediately responded to the attack by the National Guard, ready to attack the National Guard. Faculty members of Kent State began to flood the Commons to plead with the students to disappear and end the carnage. Faculty marshal Glenn Frank plead with students saying, “I don’t care whether you’ve never listened to anyone before in your lives. I am begging you right now. If you don’t disperse right now, they’re going to move in, and it can only be a slaughter. Would you listen to me? Jesus Christ, I don’t want to be part of this...!”⁷⁹ After 20 minuets of pleading Frank was successful and the students left, and the paramedics came into

⁷⁶ FBI, *Kent State*, Kent State Part 1 of 22, Pg. 25. FBI: Vault, 2010
<https://vault.fbi.gov/Kent%20State/Kent%20State%20Part%201%20of%2022/view>, (June 20, 2020).

⁷⁷ FBI, *Kent State*, Kent State Part 1 of 22, Pg. 45. FBI: Vault, 2010
<https://vault.fbi.gov/Kent%20State/Kent%20State%20Part%201%20of%2022/view>, (June 20, 2020).

⁷⁸ John Kifner, “4 Kent State Students Killed by Troops”, *The New York Times*, May 4, 1970.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

tend to the wounded. Eyewitnesses reported that Frank's words saved the lives of the remaining students present.⁸⁰ With his words, Frank effectively ended the Kent State Shooting.

In the days and weeks following the Kent State shooting a period of national mourning took place for the lives of the four young students. News sources worldwide ran photos of the incident, with the most popular one being the photo of Mary Ann Vecchio crying over the body of Jeffery Miller.



FIGURE 2 - JOHN FILO - MARY ANN VECCHIO STANDING OVER THE BODY OF JEFFERY MILLER

The photography was taken by John Filo who was a photojournalism student at Kent State. He would be awarded the Pulitzer Prize for the photo, and it would become one of the most enduring photos of the Anti-War and student movements.⁸¹ The photograph additionally had an immediate effect on those who saw it. The anguish on Mary Ann Vecchio's face caused a sharp empathetic

⁸⁰ "Photographer John Filo Discusses His Famous Kent State Photograph and the Events of May 4, 1970," CNN (Cable News Network, May 4, 2000), <http://www.cnn.com/chat/transcripts/2000/5/4/filo/>.

⁸¹ Angie Lovelave, "John Filo: Iconic Photos of the Vietnam War and Their Influence on Collective Memory", *Vietnam Iconic Photos*, August 26, 2010.

reaction. The parallels between this image and those seen in the Vietnam War on the nightly news caused famed playwright Arthur Miller to say, “May 4, 1970, was the day the war came home.”⁸² As summed up by Miller, this image struck a chord amongst Americans as it showed the violence of the Vietnam War in their own backyard, rather than on the other side of the world. For those in the student movement this image, and the events of May 4th, became a stark reminder of not only what they were fighting for, but also whom they were fighting against. At a sympathetic protest at New York University, students hung a banner stating, “They Can’t Kill Us All”.⁸³

On May 8th, four days after Kent State, another protest was held in New York City in front of the Federal Hall National Memorial. The Student Movement and their supporters were met by a counter-protestor largely made up of pro-Nixon construction workers led by Peter J. Brennan.⁸⁴ The first wave of construction workers who met the students came from the World Trade Center building site. By noon office workers and construction workers from other boroughs of New York City joined the ranks.⁸⁵ The confrontation between these two groups became known as the Hard Hat Riot. Some 1,000 students were met by over 400 construction workers, who were under instruction to attack the students. The clash began at the corner of Wall Street and Broad Street, but soon made its way to New York City Hall. By the end of the riot 70 people were injured and six people were arrested. The media at the time, particularly the New York Times, could not understand what exactly had happened. While some reports claimed that it was

⁸² Bob Dyer, “Kent State Shoot: 50 Years Later: Iconic image from Kent State shooting stokes the fires of Anti-Vietnam sentiment” *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 4, 2020.

⁸³ William A. Gordon, *The Fourth of May: Killings and Coverups at Kent State*, (Buffalo, NY; Prometheus Books, 1990). Pg. 23-29.

⁸⁴ Brennan would later be appointed by Nixon to be the U.S. Labour Secretary

⁸⁵ David Paul Kuhn, *The Hardhat Riot: Nixon, New York City, and the Dawn of the White Working-Class Revolution*. (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2020). Pg. 189, 352.

“Nixon’s silent majority flexing their muscles”, others were confused by the presence of union leaders and members such as Brennan. This confusion finally became clear during the Watergate Trial and the release of Nixon’s White House tapes. In a transcript dated May 5th, Charles Colson, a special advisor to Nixon known as the “hatchet man” due to his willingness to be ruthless to achieve his goals, as well as Nixon’s advisor H.R. Haldeman, can be heard suggesting using Union leaders, including Brennan, to attack students.⁸⁶ Colson (or Nixon the tape is unclear) suggests using teamsters to, “go in and knock their heads off.” To which Colson replied, “Murderers. Guys that really, you know, that’s what they really do ... it’s the regular strike busters-types and all that...and then they’re gonna beat the shit out of some of these people. And, uh, and hope they really hurt ‘em. You know...smash some noses.”⁸⁷ This conversation took place in the Oval Office and was recorded using hidden tape recorders. So, while it is unclear how much Nixon spoke on the plan, he certainly was aware of it. This would not be the only action Nixon’s administration took against the sympathetic protestors.

On the evening of May 8th, Nixon held a press conference to try and defuse the tension before the student movement descended upon Washington D.C. to stage a march that had been planned just after Kent State. In the conference Nixon said, “I understand how you [the students] feel” but assured the American public that the invasion of Cambodia was in the pursuit of peace.⁸⁸ May 9th, one day after the Hard Hat Riot, 100,000 people marched in Washington D.C. against the police killing of students. In preparation of this Nixon was taken to Camp David of his own protection, and Charles Colson, “the Hatchet Man”, was left to oversee much of the remaining staff. Colson said that the military had been called to protect the Nixon Administration

⁸⁶ “Tape: Nixon Wanted Thugs to Assault Demonstrators”, *The Palm Beach Post*. September 24, 1981.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Kuhn, *The Hardhat Riot*, Pg. 224-225.

from the angry students. Many in Nixon's administration, including Colson, believed that the students were not protesting but rather trying to start a "civil war".⁸⁹ In an interview in 2007, Colson claimed that, "The city [Washington D.C.] was an armed camp. The mobs were smashing windows, slashing tires, dragging parked cars into intersections, even throwing bedsprings off overpasses into the traffic below. This was the quote, student protest. That's not student protest, that's civil war."⁹⁰ To further blame the students Nixon's press secretary Ron Ziegler, said the Kent State shooting was a remainder that "when dissent turns to violence, it invites tragedy."⁹¹ These callous statements further incensed not only the student movement, but also any American related to the movement. The father of Kent State victim Alison Beth Krause spoke on National TV about Nixon's actions against student movement "bums" saying, "my child was not a bum."⁹² On May 15, Life Magazine ran an issue about the shooting. In the issue the events at Kent State were described as "at its outset to be merely another of the scores of student demonstrations that have rocked the U.S. campuses. But before it ended, in senseless and brutal murder at point-blank range, Kent State had become a symbol of the fearful hazards latent in dissent, and in the policies that cause it."⁹³ This was emphasised with the use of John Filo's photograph. In pop culture, the music world responded to the tragedy with Neil Young releasing his song "Ohio". In the song Young sings about "tin soldiers" and Nixon heading to Ohio, while the students are on their own. Once Nixon and the soldiers arrive, the soldiers begin "cutting us [students] down".⁹⁴ After Kent State, the groups who supported the students became very vocal.

⁸⁹ Juan de Onis, "Nixon puts 'bums' label on some college radicals." *The New York Times*, May 1, 1970.

⁹⁰ *Nixon: A Presidency Revealed (television)*, Dir. Joe Angio, (History Channel , 2007).

⁹¹ Means, *67 Shots*, Pg. 22.

⁹² De Onis, "bums", "Photographer John Filo Discusses His Famous Kent State Photograph and the Events of May 4, 1970," CNN (Cable News Network, May 4, 2000), <http://www.cnn.com/chat/transcripts/2000/5/4/filo/>.

⁹³ "Tragedy at Kent: Cambodia and Dissent: The Crisis of Presidential Leadership", *Life Magazine*, May 15, 1970. Pg. 18.

⁹⁴ Neil Young, "Ohio", Side 4, No. 1 on 4 Way Street, Atlantic Records, 1970, Vinyl.

Despite a vocal group of supporters, many Americans remained suspicious of the student movement, believing the image of them presented by Nixon. A Gallup poll was taken on May 5th, the day after Kent State, asking who was to blame for the shooting. It was reported that 58 percent of people believed the students were to blame, 11 percent believed the National Guard was to blame, and 31 percent held no opinion.⁹⁵ While the percentage of people who admitted to blaming the National Guard was small, they were a very vocal group, and included members of the media such as Seymore Hersh. To quell the vocal opposition, Nixon established the President's Commission on Campus Unrest, also known as the Scranton Commission, on June 13th, 1970. By September, the Commission found that the National Guard's actions were unjustified as they were not in a position of real danger. It concluded by saying that "The Kent State tragedy must mark the last time that, as a matter of course, loaded rifles are issued to guardsmen confronting student demonstrators."⁹⁶ The Commission was successful in its goal of quelling the unrest caused by the events at Kent State, and many of the student movement sympathisers stopped their vocal dissent.⁹⁷

The effect of Kent State on foreign policy was complex. As the protest at Kent State was a direct reaction to the invasion of Cambodia, Kent State itself is often overlooked as a factor in foreign policy. However, when viewed in the larger narrative of the Student Movement, it is

⁹⁵ "Campus Unrest Linked to Drugs", *Palm Beach Post*, May 28, 1970.

⁹⁶ Presidential Commission on Campus Unrest. *Special Report on Kent State*, Washington D.C., 1970. Pg. 30

⁹⁷ Notably, the commission did not talk about the Jackson State College Killings in Mississippi. Jackson State College (now university), which is a historically Black College, held a protest in solidarity with Kent State, and also against the invasion of Cambodia on May 14th, 1970, ten days after Kent State. Approximately 100 students congregated on the main street on campus, reportedly chanting and "throwing rocks" at motorists, which was not confirmed. 75 Jackson Police Officers confronted the students and a Midnight opened fire on the crowd. Two Students were killed, Phillip Lafayette Gibbs (21) and James Earl Green (17). 12 other students were wounded. In the 30 seconds of gun fire, over 460 shots were fired, shattering every window on the main street. Despite the similarities to Kent State, and the tragedy of such young bright lives being taken, Jackson State had virtually no media attention, and no investigation on par with Kent State. The main difference between these two situations was the fact that Jackson State was Black, and Kent State was White.

rather the finale in a long line of grass roots protests which left its mark on Nixon and Kissinger foreign policy. The first effect of Kent State was subtle, but not insignificant. Due to the public reaction to the invasion in Cambodia as well as Kent State, the peace negotiations between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho were halted.⁷⁶ While prior to this event the statesmen had been meeting every couple of months, there was a distinct lack of communications from April 1970 until September of the same year. Kissinger noted on April 4th, 1970 that the meetings between Le Duc Tho and himself had stalled as neither side wished to concede, and both held equal footing. This comment was made less than a month before Nixon's announcement of the invasion of Cambodia, however, the plans for the invasion had already been underway.⁹⁸

Kissinger's meetings with the North Vietnamese did not begin again until September of 1970, where Le Duc Tho was not present, but instead sent Xuan Thuy, another statesman, in his place. At this meeting Kissinger once again forwarded his request that the two countries try and reach a peace settlement through negotiations, saying the military actions which the United States has taken against the North Vietnamese and its allies were a result of the North's reluctance to negotiate fairly.⁹⁹ To this claim Thuy responded that,

The dispatch of U.S. troops into Cambodia is obvious. You can't say we are making pressure on you. It is the U.S. which makes pressure on us. The U.S. thought it could intimidate the Vietnamese people by extending the war to Laos and Cambodia. As a result, the U.S. has sunk deeper and has met with more difficulties, and it will be difficult for the U.S. to get out of the war now. Maybe the evaluations differ on your side. You may think that by your operations in Cambodia you have gained an advantage. As for us, we understand that the more the U.S. extends the war, the more difficulties the U.S. meets with.¹⁰⁰

⁷⁶ Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1979), Pg. 1018.

⁶ Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1979), Pg. 1018.

S 1969-1976, Volume XLII, Vietnam: The Kissinger-Le Duc Tho Negotiations. Document 5. Pg. 70.

⁹⁹ Unknown, "Memorandum of Conversation, September 7, 1970, 9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m." FRUS 1969-1976, Volume XLII, Vietnam: The Kissinger-Le Duc Tho Negotiations. Document 6. Pg. 93.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, Pg. 101.

By referencing the invasion of Cambodia, specifically as an American action to attempt to engage the North Vietnamese, Thuy showed that the North Vietnamese delegation was not intimidated nor pressured by the American military. This was further shown in his referring to the invasion as “[sinking America] deeper” into the war and causing more difficulties. The insinuation with this comment, was that by invading Cambodia the American government had cause more political strife for itself both internationally and domestically. This reality made the North Vietnamese more confident in asking for what they saw was fair during the peace negotiations, further delaying the desired truce. In fact, it would take another three years and countless hours of negotiation to achieve the Paris Peace Accords between the United States and North Vietnam, and another five years for the United States to finally retreat from Vietnam.

By the end of 1970, the state of the Vietnam War was in limbo, and Kissinger continued to strive for negotiations. In the United States, despite the uproar about Kent State, the SDS continued to crumble as an organization. While their ideas still resonated with many, the organization could not recover from the attacks against them by the Nixon administration. By the end of 1970 under 500 members of the SDS remained across its many factions. While the final faction, SDS-WSA, did not officially dissolve until 1974, they had no national base, and no longer made the same political impact as its predecessor. By the end of 1970 it appeared as though Nixon had won the war against the Student Movement.

Conclusion – Who actually won?

By the end of 1970, the SDS had officially disintegrated. With his opposition defeated it appeared to the “Silent Majority” that Nixon had emerged victorious from the fray. While a quieter, more traditional opposition still remained in the form of the Democratic political party, Nixon was free to conduct his business for foreign and domestic policy guided only by his personal views and aspirations. He turned his attention to his re-election campaign and composed new policies which would endear him to both his “silent Majority” and centrists sceptical of the Leftist movement. He began his infamous War on Drugs in the summer of 1971, which was part of his vision of America as tough on crime and returning back to family values. The other motive for the War on Drugs was as a tool to further discredit social opposition movements. In an April 2016 interview with Harper’s Magazine, one of Nixon’s top aides, John Ehrlichman said,

...the Nixon White House after that [1968 election], had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people. You understand what I’m saying? We knew we couldn’t make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did.¹

In 1972, he deployed another facet of his Détente foreign policy, a rapprochement with China. Widely seen as the first step in crossing the Iron Curtain, this move was designed to open China

¹ Dan Baum, Jamelle Bouie, Danielle Allen, Alexander Dziadosz, and Garth Greenwell. “[Report]: Legalize It All by Dan Baum.” Harper’s Magazine, March 31, 2016. <http://harpers.org/archive/2016/04/legalize-it-all/>.

up for economic trade.² A year later, in 1973, Kissinger and Nixon signed the Paris Peace Accords between the US and North Vietnam. This was the culmination of Kissinger's meetings with Le Duc Tho, and won both Kissinger and Le Duc Tho a Nobel Peace Prize.³ These accords appeared to the American people as a sign that the Vietnam War was ending. Despite all of these victories and accomplishments, Nixon's success could only last so long, and the crimes he committed in order to achieve these goals began to surface all because of one stupid mistake.

On June 17, 1972, five men were arrested attempting to place and repair wire tapping equipment at the Democratic National Committee office in the Watergate Office Complex, Washington, D.C. These men were caught because while they blacked the lock using tape, they placed it perpendicular to the door. This made it visible from the hallway. A night security guard noticed the tape and called the police, beginning the end of Nixon's presidency. Over the next two years, proof of Nixon's illegal activity began to siphon out of the White House. Journalists from across the country and the world clamoured to write about both the conspiracy to re-elect Nixon and other actions taken to retain his power while in office. While famously Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein broke the Watergate story, a contemporary of theirs broke the larger story of Nixon's misdeeds. This journalist was the incomparable Seymore Hersch. Hersch, a New York Times reporter, who had been a vocal opponent to the Nixon administration, especially when it came to Kissinger's foreign policy. Hersch argued that Kissinger and Nixon regularly stepped over the line of priority, and sometimes humanity, when dealing with both foreign issues and domestic problems.⁴ Then, on December 22, 1974, he published the proof he

² Raymond L Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1985.) Pg. 1093.

³ Henry Kissinger, *Ending the Vietnam War*, (New York; Simon and Shuster, 2003) Pg. 493. Le Duc Tho would decline the prize as he felt that praise was premature considering the war was still ongoing.

⁴ Hersch, Seymore. "Huge C.I.A. Operation Reported in U.S. against Antiwar Forces, Other Dissidents in Nixon Years'." *New York Times*, December 22, 1974.

had long searched for, the CIA's "family jewels". Hersch had obtained this information from CIA direction William Colby in early 1974, however was sworn to not publish so long as the operations were active.⁵

The "family jewels," referred to by Hersch as the "skeletons in the CIA closet", was a collection of reports outlining the illegal activities undertaken by the CIA both domestically and abroad. These included reports of assassination attempts, as well as summaries of missions involving the spying on American citizens. The key element to the revelation of the CIA's illegal foreign activity was that this was all under COINTELPRO. As a result of Hersch's article, a committee was set up in January 1975 to fully understand just what was going on in the secretive federal policing institutions such as the CIA and FBI. This committee was dubbed the United States Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities. As this was very wordy and had no good acronym, it later became known as the Church Committee, named after the leader of the group Idaho Senator Frank Church. The group investigated the operation of COINTELPRO in four different federal agencies, the FBI, the CIA, the National Security Agency (NSA), and the Internal Revenue Agency (IRS).

In April 1976, the Church Committee published their findings in six books. Additionally, seven volumes of hearings were published. These books outlined truly heinous activity by the federal agencies, including assassination attempts by the CIA on Cuban President Fidel Castro and President of South Vietnam Ngo Dinh Diem, as well as multiple others. They also discovered "Operation SHAMROCK" in which major telecommunications companies shared information with the NSA without warrants, thus allowing unchecked spying on the American

⁵ William Burr, "Document Friday: The Origins of 'Glomar' Declassified." UNREDACTED, June 15, 2012. <https://unredacted.com/2012/06/15/document-friday-the-origins-of-glomar-declassified/>.

people. As for the FBI, their operations against the Student Movement came to light.⁶ When it finally became clear that the FBI used illegal means to arrest, harass, and hurt members of opposition groups, many of those arrested were released from prison. Among these people were several members of the extremist faction, the Weathermen. However, despite some truly guilty people going free, more innocent people were also released, as it is better to free a guilty person than to imprison an innocent. With the revelation of the Church Committee published, COINTELPRO, in that iteration, was finally defeated.

Nixon's tenure as president came to end; however, erasing systemic wrong doings is not as simple as the process of impeachment. Much like a hydra if you cut off one head more pop up in its place. In the case of the American political establishment this meant that ending one ethically questionable policing program simple breeds others. COINTELPRO, in name and structure, was cut down, yet the desire to control and survey American people and foreign elements did not disappear. The survival of political paranoia and widespread policing became obvious with the document leaked by Edward Snowden in the Spring of 2013. These documents, largely from the NSA, outlined illegal activities undertaken by the American government, as well as their allies in the *Five Eyes* (Canada, England, New Zealand, Australia), to spy on and attempt to control law abiding citizens. The revelations were similar to those in the Church Committee. Where the Church Committee found that the FBI, CIA, NSA, and IRA were violating constitutional rights to spy on and disrupt the actions of American citizens domestically, the Snowden documents found that telecommunication companies had be granting access to the NSA and CIA, without a warrant, similarly violating the rights of American

⁶ "Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, Notable Senate Investigations, U.S. Senate Historical Office, Washington, D.C."

people.⁷ Unlike with COINTELPRO, however, the revelation of the NSA and CIA's illegal activity did not stop the activity itself, and Snowden fled to Russia to escape retaliation.⁸ This moment did cause one change, however. It heightened the discussion of the modern police state.

So, what does this mean for the people living in the year 2020? Why should we even bother looking at the relationship between Nixon, students, and the world? The answer, while a cliché, is that “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”⁹ So with this in mind we should take look back, not just to January of 2020, but the election of Donald Trump in 2016. By looking at Trump's election through the lens of Nixon's presidency some staggering similarities emerge. The election campaign of Donald Trump was built on fear mongering and vilifying the “left”. Where Nixon targeted the SDS and the Black Panthers, Trump targeted the “elite left” and the Black Lives Matter movement. In terms of foreign policy, where Nixon blamed Vietnam solely on former president Lyndon B Johnson, Trump blamed the turmoil in the Middle East on his predecessors saying, “They've created ISIS. Hillary Clinton created ISIS with Obama; created with Obama.”¹⁰ As if taking a play out of Nixon's book, Trump positioned himself as the answer to ending the battle on foreign soil. While both of these elements of Trump's election parallel Nixon's election, it is the role of police which provides the most troubling and important lesson.

Through this analysis of Nixon's policies towards students the role of police was clearly seen as the protectors of the establishment, or Nixon's government and interests. This, in and of

⁷ This spying was also taking place against citizens of other countries including Canada; Glen Greenwald, “Edward Snowden: the Whistleblower behind the NSA Surveillance Revelations.” *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, June 11, 2013. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/09/edward-snowden-nsa-whistleblower-surveillance>.

⁸ He claims that he will only return to the United States once he is granted a fair and unbiased trial. It may be a while.

⁹ George Santayana, *The Life of Reason: Five Volumes in One*, (New York: Echo Library, 2006), Pg. 12.

¹⁰ At a rally, as quoted in "[TRUMP: 'Hillary Clinton created ISIS with Obama'](#)" by Colin Campbell, *Business Insider* (3 January 2016)

itself, violated the idea that the police, at every level, are present to protect the safety and interests of the American people. While it may have appeared that after the Church Committee that these actions were halted and the American citizens were once again the under the protection of the police, current event would suggest otherwise. On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, a 46-year old father was killed by police officers, in a horrific show of excessive force. He had been accused of using a counterfeit bill to pay for goods at a nearby store, an alleged crime for which police felt the need kneel on his neck till he stopped breathing. This moment was videoed and sent around the world, triggering a fresh wave of protests led by the Black Lives Matter movement, with support of other left-wing organizations. The governmental response to this, much as was seen under the Nixon administration, was launch a smear campaign against the protestors and endorse the use of police force to maintain the status quo. While COINTELPRO was a widespread program established in the name of national security, and the policing actions today are largely a trend of smaller and independent police forces, its is the support of excessive policing by the president which ties these two moments together. Months of “non-lethal” force has been used against protestors, as well as a smear campaign spearheaded by the Trump administration.¹¹ This is similar to the smear campaign undertaken by Nixon against the SDS and their allies. The division that was seen between left and right under Nixon has turned into a chasm with no noticeable bridge.

I argue that the winner of this battle was the SDS. If we look at the goals of the two, Nixon’s to be remembered as great, and the SDS to change American policy, it is clear that they only ones to come close to their goal were the SDS. While Nixon dismantled the SDS as an organization, won his re-elections, and implemented policies which shaped America, In the end

¹¹ While the force is considered “non-lethal” it can cause sever and life changing injuries

he was impeached and disgraced for his illegal actions. It was the end of his career as president which would shape how history would remember him, making it uncommon for his to be remembered as a great president. The SDS did in fact reach their goal, however, not as they imagined. While they did not immediately end the war or changed Nixon's policies in to fit their ideology, they nevertheless shifted Nixon's foreign policy.

In the end this is a David and Goliath tale. While it may appear that changing the political system is a challenge insurmountable by everyday citizens, this could not be farther from the truth. The power of social movements is undeniable and indelible. As with the SDS against Richard Nixon, the battle may have appeared to be lost, however, simply by existing and being brave enough to raise their voices, the SDS changed both domestic and foreign policy. They accomplished this with both small actions and larger protests, and despite the violation of rights, and death caused by policing, they accomplished their goal. It is important to stand up for justice, truth, and your beliefs. Because, as we have learned here, not matter how small your voice, someone is listening, and it could change the world.

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