

# **YOUTH POWER!**

## **The Rise of Youth and the Role Played by the Norwegian *Workers' Youth League* in the Protest against the US- Vietnam War 1965-1973**

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**Master's Thesis in Modern International and Transnational History  
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“Youth Power” means “Ung makt” in Norwegian. An article published in *Alternativet* by Bjørn Skogstad Aamo inspired the title of the thesis. In the controversial article, Skogstad Aamo argued that “a new policy required new politicians” in line with the debate on Vietnam issue. It was therefore necessary to overpower the labour movement from the within through YOUTH POWER!

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## **Preface**

The process of researching and writing this thesis has been a long and fascinating journey. It has been an awe-inspiring process full of discoveries of how the US-Vietnam War shaped the Norwegian society during the Radical Sixties but also about what came afterwards. Norway became a safe heaven for many Vietnamese boat refugees including both of my parents. Thus, the US-Vietnam War has been a crucial part of my identity – and writing this thesis has made me proud to be a second-generation immigrant, and at the same time, honoured to be a part of the multicultural Norwegian society.

Now, at the very end of this process, I would like to thank my family and friends – especially Simen, Siw and Will for their tremendous help and support. I would also like to thank my supervisor, Professor Doug Rossinow, who has guided me with his wise words throughout the writing of this thesis.

# 1. Introduction

On 19<sup>th</sup> January 1973 around 7500 people mobilised and marched from Universitetsplassen to Youngstorget in Oslo to show solidarity and to protest against the US involvement in Vietnam.<sup>1</sup> It is believed to be the biggest protest against the US involvement in Vietnam that was ever held in Norway.<sup>2</sup> A few days later, the Americans and the North Vietnamese signed the so-called Paris Peace Accords. The accords included a set of agreements that established peace between the United States and North Vietnam.

The expansion of the US government's extensive military intervention in Vietnam generated a youth rebellion across the United States and Europe – and Norway was no exception. The protest against the US involvement in Vietnam began among small groups of peace activists and leftist intellectuals, mostly on university campuses. But it eventually extended beyond the university campus. The protest against the US-Vietnam War led to demonstrations in the streets and a series of anti-war activities with mostly students in charge. However, the anti-war movement gained national prominence in 1965 – especially after the United States began to heavily bomb North Vietnam. The anti-war movement attracted a widening base of support over the next three years, reaching its peak in 1967/1968. It was the events of the *Tet* Offensive in the late January and early February of 1968 that underlined the complicated state of the conflict, and that showed that the end was nowhere in sight.<sup>3</sup>

The US-Vietnam War produced waves of shock and discontent and sparked the most intense period of the anti-war protests of the time. It was through the activism of the anti-war movement that the world saw the true power of youth. Furthermore, the young had large and lasting effects on Norwegian politics through their active role in the anti-war movement. Through the movement, they managed to shape Norwegian foreign policy and thus, arguably, exert indirect influence on the US-Vietnam War.

What had been regarded as a disobedient and deviant attitude among a few youths in the beginning of the mid-1960s had over the years grown to become an ideological common

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<sup>1</sup> Arbeiderbladet, 20.01.1973.

<sup>2</sup> Godbolt, "AUF og Protesten mot Vietnamkrigen: Opprør og Kontinuitet", p. 57.

<sup>3</sup> Atwood, *The Vietnam War: a Concise International History*, pp. 115-116. The Tet offensive was a massive military offensive launched by the North Vietnamese. It was launched throughout the whole of South Vietnam and aimed at inspiring a general uprising to overthrow the Southern Saigon government and bring the National Front League (NFL) to power.

ground for the whole Norwegian Labour movement with the Workers' Youth League leading a mass movement. The Workers' Youth League (*Arbeidernes Ungdomsfylking* or AUF) was Norway's largest political youth organisation and affiliated with the Norwegian Labour Party (*Arbeiderpartiet* or AP).<sup>4</sup> Their once contested and radical view eventually became the common public opinion that was voiced by most of the Norwegian people by the end of the 1960s.

Since then, it has been argued that the Workers' Youth League played a key role in the anti-war movement. The Workers' Youth League challenged the boundaries of institutional politics. The movement changed the structures and dynamics of Norwegian domestic politics.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, their impact on the anti-war movement does not resonate strongly in the collective memory of the anti-war movement during the "Radical Sixties".<sup>6</sup> Instead, other political youth organisations and groups of protesters, who had similarly lasting effects on the Norwegian domestic politics, usually overshadow the legacy of the Workers' Youth League.<sup>7</sup>

There were indeed many political organisations and interest groups that were involved in the movement. However, the Workers' Youth League had a clear advantage. They were in a unique position that allowed them to thrive and become the key link between the movement and established political institutions; in other words, between the protestors and political decision-making.<sup>8</sup> They appeared to be the only political youth organisation mediating between the extra-parliamentary opposition and typical, traditional political institutions and formal bodies.<sup>9</sup> Looking back, there is no doubt that the Workers' Youth League had a distinctive role in mobilising and gathering support for the anti-war movement. One can argue that their unique position in the movement was mainly because of their strong and close connections to institutions of power and influence in Norway. However, the League's involvement with the anti-war movement created a conflict in their political identity – especially as they were viewed as the next generation of leaders in the Labour Party.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Halvorsen, "Partiets salt: AUFs historie", p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Offe, "New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics", p. 817.

<sup>6</sup> Godbolt, "AUF og protesten mot Vietnamkrigen: Opprør og kontinuitet", p. 57.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

It was the US-Vietnam War, more than other international issues that caused a shakeup in Norwegian domestic politics. The non-socialist coalition government that came to power at the *Storting* during the course of the US-Vietnam War was hesitant to openly condemn and criticise the US involvement in Vietnam.<sup>11</sup> The United States was seen as an important ally – especially within the context of the intergovernmental military alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Like the non-socialist coalition government, the leadership of the Labour Party was divided on their standpoint on the so-called Vietnam Issue.<sup>12</sup> Over time, the anti-war movement, along with the Workers’ Youth League and elements of the Labour Party, managed to put pressure on the leadership of the Labour Party to accommodate a radical critique of the United States’ warfare in Vietnam. This caused a chain reaction that eventually led Norway to become the first NATO member state, much to the dismay of the US, to diplomatically recognise the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam or DRV) when the Labour Party was briefly back in power in 1971.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the conflict shaped the identity of many Norwegian youths. The young began to flex their muscles and raise their voices in protest. The anti-war activism demonstrated by the movement during the 1960s very much displayed the rise of the youth power in Norwegian domestic politics.

This thesis will provide a brief overview of the history of this important social and political movement and at the same time, highlight its key formative events. Additionally, it will examine the internal conflicts that arose in the movement, especially between the movement and the Labour Party. Finally, its lasting effects on the country will be discussed. It will specifically look at the crucial time period from 1965 to 1973, when the movement was the most active. Here, the thesis will shed light on several questions while exploring the history of the Norwegian anti-war movement. First of all, how did the US-Vietnam War become such an important issue for Norwegian youth? Second, why did a political youth organisation such as the Workers’ Youth League become the dominant voice of the anti-war movement? Lastly, what kind of impact did the anti-war movement have on Norwegian domestic politics?

In order to answer the questions above, the thesis is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter is divided into two sections. The first section will provide the theoretical framing

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<sup>11</sup> Prime Minister Per Borten (1914 – 2005) led the Cabinet. The non-socialist coalition consisted of the Conservative Party, the Centre Party, the Liberal Party and the Christian Democratic Party.

<sup>12</sup> Godbolt, Holmsted Larsen and Hein Rasmussen, “The Vietnam War: The Danish and Norwegian Experience 1964 – 1975”, p. 365.

<sup>13</sup> Godbolt, “Vietnam-Protesten i Norge: Fra ad hoc-aksjoner til politisk kapital”. p. 65.

of the thesis. I have decided to concentrate at theories of social movements – specifically the so-called New Social Movements. The second section will introduce the historical background of the anti-war movement. In order to capture the key events in the active years of the anti-war movement, the second chapter will explore the movement through the experience of the Worker’s Youth League in that time period. The historian James Godbolt argued that the League played a prominent role in the movement – especially in facilitating the shift in public opinion towards supporting the demands of the movement.<sup>14</sup> Arguably, the Workers’ Youth League involvement boosted the anti-war movement in Norway. This chapter will investigate the impact of the anti-war movement as well. The third and final chapter will conclude the thesis by returning to, and reflecting on, the questions raised and providing further analysis.

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<sup>14</sup> Godbolt, “AUF og protesten mot Vietnamkrigen: Opprør og kontinuitet”, p. 57.



## **1.1 The Power of Protest: Theoretical Framing of the Norwegian Anti-War Movement**

Between 1965 and 1973, hundreds of ordinary Norwegians participated in one of the most remarkable and significant movements in Norwegian history. The social movement became known as the anti-war movement. During this time period, there were massive organised street marches, rallies and teach-ins both at local and national levels. They all had one common goal, which was to voice their objections to the escalating role of the US in Vietnam and to initiate peace talks that could provide an end to the conflict.

Since the end of the Second World War, radical and revolutionary movements have played a prominent role in international as well as national politics.<sup>15</sup> The anti-war movement that thrived in Norway during the 1960s was certainly no exception. The 1960s was a decade of transformation in collective action in the pursuit of social change in society. As the sociologist Diana Kendall argued, “A social change is something that does not occur of its own accord. Social change was brought by collective behaviour and social movements.”<sup>16</sup> It appears that the youth was determined to bring that.

This section of the chapter will investigate the theoretical framing of this remarkable social, cultural and political movement. By looking at the theories of the New Social Movement (NSM) scholarship, one will gain a fuller understanding of the anti-war movement. The theories can also help to explain the political behaviour of what historians and scholars have labelled as ‘a global phenomenon of youth rebellion’. Moreover, the New Social Movement theories can provide insights that can be helpful in understanding the anti-war movement as a whole as well. Past analyses of social movements and related organisations have shown that there was a close link between the frustrations and grievances of a collective of actors and the growth or decline of movement activity.<sup>17</sup>

However, it is important to keep in mind that the anti-war movement that emerged in Norway arguably constituted a local branch of the American anti-war movement. It did have many characteristics of the American anti-war movement. However, despite the similar characteristics, the Norwegian anti-war movement proved, for instance, to be unique and

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<sup>15</sup> Vasquez, “A Learning Theory of the American Anti-Vietnam War Movement”, p. 299.

<sup>16</sup> Kendall, *Sociology in Our Times: the Essentials*, p. 541.

<sup>17</sup> McCarthy and Zald, “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: a Partial Theory”, p. 1212.

different in comparison to its counterparts in the neighbouring Scandinavian countries, Sweden and Denmark.

### **The Characteristics of a New Social Movement**

Firstly it is crucial to define what a social movement is. The historian Robert Goldberg viewed a social movement as an organised group that acted consciously to promote or resist change through collective action.<sup>18</sup> Since social movements have not become institutionalised and are external to the political mainstream, they offer “outsiders” an opportunity to have their voice heard in the public sphere.<sup>19</sup> Such movements emerged in various western societies following the mid-1960s.

When people come together in a social movement, they assign meanings to their activities in such a way that they build a framework for interacting and socially constructing their grievances, so that they can more effectively voice them and know what resolution they want for the issues at hand.<sup>20</sup> Unlike the traditional protest groups, which tended to be single issue based and often were local in terms of the scope of change they wished to implement, the new social movements were more resilient and want to see changes on an (inter)national level, according to their stated set of beliefs and ideals. Furthermore, a new social movement stressed the importance of grassroots activism in the aim of representing the interests of often marginal or excluded groups.

The difference between the New Social Movements and previous social movements was that the new movements tended to focus on issues related to human rights, rather than material issues such as economic wellbeing. Hence, New Social Movements were seen as fundamentally different from the working class movements of the industrial period.<sup>21</sup> Due to their fundamental differences, the demands of the New Social Movements have, in other words, moved away from the old instrumental issues of industrialism to the quality of life issues of post-materialism.<sup>22</sup> This explains why they have been conceptualised as “new” social movements.

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<sup>18</sup> Goldberg, “Grassroots Resistance: Social Movement in Twentieth Century America”, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Kendall, *Sociology in Our Times: the Essentials*, p. 541.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 599.

<sup>21</sup> Picardo., “New Social Movements: A Critical Review”, p. 412.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

The sociologist Jürgen Habermas viewed the New Social Movements as part of “new politics” because they focused on quality of life and individual self-realisation. In contrast, the “old politics” focused on economic, political and military security.<sup>23</sup> For that reason, new social movements pushed for specific changes in public policy that emphasised social changes in identity, lifestyle and culture. The new social movements concentrated on bringing about social mobilisation through cultural innovation, the development of new life-styles and transformation of identities. Moreover, some New Social Movement theorists, like Frank Parkin, argued that the key actors in these movements were different, as they were more likely to come from the “new middle class” (and to a certain extent the upper classes) rather than the lower social classes. The new middle class was a complex contemporary structure that Claus Offe identified as “three-folded”. The structure consisted of elements of the new middle class combined with the old middle class and also groups on the outside of the labour market.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, the workers’ movement was founded on a working-class base and ideology. Furthermore, Offe stated that the new middle class that one finds in the new social movements was much more socially aware because of their high level of education and their access to information and resources, which lead them to question the way society was structured.

### **The Theory of New Social Movements: the Paradigm**

What kinds of conditions are most likely to produce a social movement like an anti-war movement? And why was the youth drawn to a social movement like the anti-war movement? Scholars have developed a set of theories that are conceptualised as the New Social Movement Paradigm. The paradigm attempts to answer these questions and to explain the many different dimensions of mobilisation and sources of collective actions.<sup>25</sup>

It is widely accepted that the key historical movement that is the foundation of all New Social Movements theories can be seen between the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. It is within this timeframe, theorists argue, that collective action in advanced capitalist countries acquired new characteristics and conceptualisations.<sup>26</sup> The demands of the new characteristics and conceptualisations of social changes that took place within this timeframe suggest an end to Marxist philosophy of history and its central tenets. The term “New Social

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<sup>23</sup> Charles, *Feminism, the State and Social Policy*, p. 31.

<sup>24</sup> Buechler, “New Social Movement Theories”, p. 441.

<sup>25</sup> Staricchio, “The French May and the Roots of Postmodern Politics”, p. 451.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 448.

Movement” refers to a diverse array of collective actions that presumably displaced the old social movement of proletarian revolution, which is usually associated with classical Marxism.<sup>27</sup> The New Social Movement scholarship looks at the collective actions and manners, which are based on politics, ideology, and culture.<sup>28</sup>

As discussed above, there were two central claims of the New Social Movement paradigm. First, that the rise of the post-industrial economy was responsible for a new wave of social movement and second, that those movements were significantly different and unique from previous social movements of the pre-Second World War industrial economy.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, some theorists claim that the NSM paradigm can only explain the left-wing movements of modern age.<sup>30</sup> However, the NSM paradigm was based solely on observations of left-wing movements and thus it reflects the ideological bias. Yet, movements of both the left and the right were linked to changes in social structure. Through the NSM paradigm, one can understand how other social groups perceived and reacted to these changes, which can only broaden our knowledge of social change.<sup>31</sup>

### **The New Social Movement in the Light of Anti-War Movement**

The number of people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-nine increased dramatically from 1955 to 1975, reflecting the post-Second World War baby boom that began in Europe in 1945.<sup>32</sup> Students now composed a large and restrictive segment of the population and the growing mass of young citizens demanded more radical politics and power.

After analysing the NSM paradigm, one can draw several parallels between a New Social Movement and the anti-war movement that emerged in Norway. Social movements allowed people who otherwise would not have the resources to enter the game of politics a chance to do so, in this case the youth.<sup>33</sup> As with other (new) social movements, the anti-war movement relied on volunteers to carry out the work. Students or the youth in general were often useful as they had significant spare time to devote to the cause. Precisely because of their strong commitment to the cause, the students became an indispensable force for the anti-war

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<sup>27</sup> Buechler, “New Social Movement Theories”, p. 442.

<sup>28</sup> Kendall, *Sociology in Our Times: the Essentials*, p. 560.

<sup>29</sup> Picardo, “New Social Movements: A Critical Review”, pp. 411-412.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 413.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente*, p. 88.

<sup>33</sup> Kendall, *Sociology in Our Times; the Essentials*, p. 552.

movement. It was also expected that members would contribute funds, skills and knowledge to the effort.<sup>34</sup>

Individuals opposed to the US-Vietnam War in Norway began to organise early in 1965, and as public awareness of the issue increased, so did participation in the movement.<sup>35</sup> The conflict was a critical issue in that it was salient and had moral overtones. For instance, the activists sympathised with Third World countries like Vietnam. These issues were issues of high salience to the members of the movement. They were considered to be important to their way of life.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the anti-war movement was dependent on critical issues and tended to persist throughout the life of those issues. This is mostly because the members of the movements were not prepared to accept defeat. Tellingly, most of the members of the anti-war movement persisted in their activities until the defeat of the *Thieu* regime in 1975.

It is argued that the anti-war movement emerged because the activists had one common goal. According to Habermas their main goal was to “stop colonisation of the third world, to defend the civil society in its communicative understanding against the laws of money and power”.<sup>37</sup> The anti-war movement had often limited access to resources, which forced them to be creative, thus shaping in their own way a kind of collective action which was much more cultural than political. Other scholars and theorists have identified the emergence of the anti-war movement with the displacement of class politics, emerging on the back of new cultural and identity-related politics. This was shown by the fact that their demands were no longer associated with the material interests of the involved social classes. The new political concerns became independent from class structure.<sup>38</sup> The new claims were associated with the recognition of particular identities. The opportunity to choose and live with one of these identities was the highest degree of freedom one could have. The demands of the anti-war movement were to a certain extent related to the individual demands of autonomy and freedom. They fought on behalf of the suffering civilian population in North Vietnam, by representing their voice in the West. They demanded an end to the conflict, which would liberate them from colonial powers and from imperialism.

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<sup>34</sup> Goldberg, *Grassroots Resistance: Social Movements of Twentieth Century*, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Vasquez, “A Learning Theory of the American Anti-Vietnam War Movement”, p. 305.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 304.

<sup>37</sup> Staricco, “The French May and the Roots of Postmodern politics”, p. 453.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 551.

Moreover, scholars and theorists view social movements as important sources of social change. In the process of bringing about change, most movements developed innovative ways to get their ideas across to decision-makers and to the public.<sup>39</sup> For example, the anti-war movement adopted the “language of dissent”. The historian Jeremi Suri, framed the concept of “language of dissent” to explain the ideological behaviour generated by the new generation of youth. The language grew alongside the emergence of the new social movements. Suri argued that it acted as a power structure that articulated the problems and demands of the anti-war movement. As Suri explained: “The language of dissent, formulated during the early years of university expansion, provided the critical tools for youths to challenge state power”.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, mobilisation and protests could be signified, articulated and organised by using the concept of language of dissent.<sup>41</sup> In other words, it became the language of youth. The main impetus behind using the language of dissent was to produce criticism of society, which could, again, progress into the field of politics. This was exactly what the Workers’ Youth League alongside with the anti-war movement attempted, and somewhat succeeded, with the Norwegian youth wanted to change their society. It made the emergence of the anti-war movement possible because it liberated the student masses from the constraints of Marxist discourse and more importantly, it gave them concepts, ideas and words to express their concerns and their frustrations.<sup>42</sup>

Furthermore, the anti-war movement adopted a series of tactics for protesting and campaigning as part of its strategy for achieving wider change. Their actions can be considered as part of mass behaviour, which was another known characteristic of the new social movement. Mass behaviour is a collective behaviour that takes place when people respond to the same event in much the same way.<sup>43</sup> People, who respond in the same way, typically have common sources of information that provoke their collective behaviour.

The public opinion was another important political tactic that challenged mainstream politics and attempted to affect the policymaking process. This was one of the major strategies that the anti-war movement employed. The goal of the strategy was to change the opinion of the decision-maker (in this case, the leadership of the Labour party and the *Borten*

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<sup>39</sup> Kendall, *Sociology in Our Times; the Essentials*, p. 602.

<sup>40</sup> Suri, “Power and Protest”, p. 89.

<sup>41</sup> Staricco, “The French May and the Roots of Postmodern Politics”, p. 459.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 460.

<sup>43</sup> Kendall, *Sociology in Our Times; the Essentials*, p. 592.

administration).<sup>44</sup> They wanted the public to sympathise with the suffering civilian population in order to demonstrate the immorality of the war to the public.<sup>45</sup> Emphasis was placed on showing the discrepancy between policy decisions and the moral values of society. By showing the unpopularity of the war, utilising public opinion could lead decision-makers to change policy whilst building a mass movement like the anti-war movement. The purpose of the dramatic anti-war acts orchestrated by the anti-war movement was to demonstrate to the policymakers that the war was unpopular and hence they should end it.

It was important for the anti-war movement to defend their proactive anti-war actions to people who had authority over foreign policy issues and who were significant figures in the Vietnam issue. Therefore, it was crucial for the anti-war activists to develop a strategy or a message that could attract potential new participants and supporters. By emphasising the demands for peace in Vietnam and by appealing to important authorities, the anti-war activists could reach out to broader groups of supporters than those who were willing to join the protests.<sup>46</sup>

After demonstrating the unpopularity of the war, the movement tried to force the Norwegian government to adapt their viewpoint as a last resort to a difficult moral dilemma. The use of public opinion and anti-institutional politics as tactics was recognised as typical of the new social movement style.<sup>47</sup> Their strategies were utilised in the writing and publishing of articles, giving public speeches, organising teach-ins and so on. By 1967, most of the members of the movement were convinced that they represented a majority or at least a plurality viewpoint. The evidence for this stemmed primarily from their own observations of what was happening within their own movement, but also other political youth organisations like the Workers' Youth League and their affiliated Labour Party, such as new adopted policies on the Vietnam issue, while also witnessing the growth of the movement.<sup>48</sup>

The New Social Movement paradigm is a commanding tool for understanding the macro level of social structures that shaped contemporary activism.<sup>49</sup> The paradigm has much to tell us about the roots of contemporary activism and the dynamics of the movement. The anti-war

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<sup>44</sup> Borten's Cabinet was in power at the *Storting* from 12th October 1965 to 17th March 1971.

<sup>45</sup> Vasquez, "A Learning Theory of the American Anti-Vietnam War Movement", p. 308.

<sup>46</sup> Godbolt, "Den norske Vietnambevegelsen", p. 34.

<sup>47</sup> Picardo, "New Social Movements: A Critical Review", p. 416.

<sup>48</sup> Vasquez, "A Learning Theory of the American Anti-Vietnam War Movement", p. 307.

<sup>49</sup> Buechler, "New Social Movement Theories", p. 460.

movement, like many other new social movements, emphasised symbolic action, post-materialist values and collective identity. These values were features of the contemporary activism and the social structure they pursued to challenge. Furthermore, the anti-war movement was a direct outcome of the meaning of the events it was given by its actors and the new understanding of politics that was generated within its framework. It also helps in explaining why movements adopt certain strategies. The establishment of the anti-war movement was an attempt by an advanced capitalist society to produce a fundamental change of structure.<sup>50</sup> More importantly, the radical anti-war activism orchestrated by the anti-war movement demonstrated a new period of history of collective action.

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<sup>50</sup> Staricchio, "The French May and the Roots of Postmodern Politics", p. 468.



## 1.2 The Background of The Vietnam Protests: the Emergence of an Anti-war Movement in Norway

On 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1964, an American destroyer, the USS *Maddox*, came under attack from North Vietnamese torpedo boats in the Gulf of Tonkin in retaliation to South Vietnamese commando raids on the Northern Coasts. The *Maddox*, unharmed, returned fire and sank one torpedo boat. Two nights later, the captain of another destroyer, the USS *Turner Joy*, reported on the basis of confusing radar and sonar readings that his ship had been similarly targeted.<sup>51</sup> These events would be later known as the Gulf of Tonkin incidents. The events marked a turning point in the history of the US-Vietnam War.<sup>52</sup>

Some of the US officials doubted that a second attack had occurred, but the US President Lyndon B. Johnson had little interest in ascertaining the facts. Instead, he sensed the opportunity to mollify the conservatives who had been calling for more aggressive action in Vietnam. Thus, he ordered an air strike against North Vietnamese naval installations. Johnson also exploited the episode by persuading Congress to give him the power to take further military action as he saw fit. Just days after the Gulf of Tonkin incidents, the House and Senate overwhelmingly passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which authorised the President to take “all necessary measures to repel any armed attack the forces of United States and to prevent further aggression by the Communist government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam”.<sup>53</sup> The resolution gave President Johnson authorisation, without a formal declaration by Congress, for the use of military force in Vietnam.

In other words, the Gulf of Tonkin resolution opened the door to full-scale involvement in South Vietnam and consequently, open warfare between North Vietnam and the US. However, the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution indicated that the conflict was more than just a democratic war to liberate the South Vietnamese people from Communist aggression. Shortly after the US Congress passed the resolution, a small gathering of 75 people rallied outside of the American Embassy at Drammensveien 18 in Oslo.<sup>54</sup> The Gulf of Tonkin incident had therefore triggered the first demonstration in Norway against the US–Vietnam War, as it then had arguably become. Eventually, the anti-war movement emerged and at its formative phase,

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<sup>51</sup> Atwood, *The Vietnam War: a Concise International History*, p. 86.

<sup>52</sup> Godbolt, “Den norske Vietnambevegelsen”, p. 27.

<sup>53</sup> Atwood, *The Vietnam War: a Concise International History*, p. 86.

<sup>54</sup> Godbolt, “Vietnam-Protesten i Norge: Fra ad hoc-aksjoner til politisk kapital”. p. 61.

it was in search of participants, attention and legitimacy.<sup>55</sup> The debate on the Vietnam issue became more intense and the public protests continued. The anti-war movement pressed their demands on politicians and political parties, urging them to take a standpoint on the escalating conflict, namely that they should distance themselves from it.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, there were features of the Norwegian anti-war movement that would attract international attention, even that of the United States, who would question Norway's loyalty in the Vietnam issue. As this section of the chapter will explore, the anti-war movement was not only tied to the Vietnam issue, but also a series of other important questions.

The most critical event in the formative years of the Norwegian anti-war movement was a simple but a radical showcase called "the Vietnam Picture".<sup>57</sup> In July 1965 on the exhibition site, the lawn in front of the *Storting*, Kjartan Slettmark displayed his art "*Av rapport fra Vietnam: Barn overskylles av brennende napalm. Deres hud brennes til svarte sår og de dør*" (Of Report from Vietnam: Children are showered with burning napalm. Their skin burned to black wounds and they die).<sup>58</sup> Inside two big red-painted lips were capitalised cardboard letters with the names of JESUS, USA and VIETNAM. Beneath the words hung a burned baby doll whose blood dripped down on an American flag.<sup>59</sup> Slettmark announced shortly after that the picture was for sale. The money would be donated towards aiding the innocent victims of the war, the suffering civilian population in North and South Vietnam.<sup>60</sup>

By simply showcasing a radical and controversial art, uproar was produced. The impact of the Vietnam Picture was tremendous. Most importantly, the picture triggered a debate on the US-Vietnam War, which, through the media, brought the war into the Norwegian people's conscience. Shortly after the showcase, the newspapers were bursting with opinions and editorials. Until that point, there were few who had questioned the United States' intentions and motives in Vietnam – especially because the United States was an important ally of Norway through the NATO alliance. The close bond from the military alliance was a relationship that no one wanted to jeopardise – particularly not through the questioning of Norway's loyalty. The US-Vietnam War was a conflict that did not directly impact Norway

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<sup>55</sup> Godbolt, "Den norske Vietnambevegelsen", p. 28.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Førland and Korsvik, *1968: Oppør og Motkultur på Norsk*, p. 24.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

or her interests but it became an issue that concerned the Norwegian population and thus impacted the domestic politics.

As briefly mentioned, the Norwegian public opinion was not greatly concerned with what was going on at the beginning of the US-Vietnam War. The Vietnam Picture changed this. An open debate could now occur in the public sphere.<sup>61</sup> Placing the Vietnam Picture in front of the *Storting* was a strong political statement itself. The message was loud, clear and powerful. The Vietnam Picture, which was intended to be only a work of art, became instead, a powerful source of influence that changed the dynamics of the Norwegian debate on the Vietnam issue.<sup>62</sup> The Vietnam issue was no longer defined as a conversation that involved only foreign policy experts and politicians. It became a matter that concerned everyone.

The Vietnam Picture did not only bring attention to the US-Vietnam War, but it also had important repercussions for the framing of the conflict. At the time, there were several competing representations of the US-Vietnam War. Some saw the war as communist aggression, some as national liberation while yet others saw it as a humanitarian tragedy. Slettmark's picture was probably a major reason why the representation of the war as a humanitarian tragedy became widespread and eventually gained a hegemonic position in the Vietnam debate that lasted until 1967.<sup>63</sup> This may in turn explain why the Norwegian anti-war movement was so strong and unified in the beginning. Framing the protest in humanitarian terms connected it with the enduring Norwegian peace and humanitarian traditions. Hence, the message found acceptance among the respectful and sympathetic audience.<sup>64</sup> Slettmark passed moral judgement on a significant and bloody conflict and wanted to draw the attention to innocent victims of the war – highlighting the moral and ethical aspects of war. He accordingly questioned the (human) price of the war.

As E.M. Schreiber described it “the casualties are symptom of what war costs, and when visible progress was limited, it can be expected that the public increasingly will see the war as representing an unfavourable balance between costs and benefits”.<sup>65</sup> This would lead to a public opinion shift where support for such a war drop over time. In other words, the longer a

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<sup>61</sup> Førland and Korsvik, 1968: *Oppør og motkultur på norsk*, p. 24.

<sup>62</sup> Førland, “1968 in Norway: Piecemeal, Peaceful and Postmodern”, p. 383.

<sup>63</sup> Godbolt, Holmestad Larsen and Hein Rasmussen, “The Vietnam War: The Danish and Norwegian Experience 1964-1975”, p. 407.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Schreiber, “Anti-War Demonstrations and American Public Opinion on the Vietnam War”, p. 228.

war's duration, the less its popularity, and time favoured the anti-war movement. Nevertheless, the Vietnam Picture played a crucial role in motivating people to participate in acts of protest. As Godbolt framed it "the picture alone did not create the movement, but it did influence heavily the timing, framing and the profile of the anti-war movement".<sup>66</sup>

The Vietnam Picture did not only ignite the debate, but it also created an opportunity for anti-war activists to present their alternative view on the war and strengthen their message concerning the immorality of the war. The debate around the Vietnam Picture took an unexpected turn and became intertwined with the anti-war movement and the youth rebellion. The mainstream of the youth rebellion concerned self-realisation and individual freedom, but it also had an important political current. It was a revolt against the established power structure and the anti-war movement contributed to empowering the youth. The anti-war movement encouraged the youth to breach the norms that limited free speech and expression.<sup>67</sup>

Meanwhile, the radical and pacifist organisation *Folkereisning mot krig* (FMK), the Norwegian branch of the War Resisters' International, purchased the Vietnam Picture. The purchase launched a nationwide fundraising campaign to aid the war-torn civilian population of Vietnam.<sup>68</sup> The launch of the fundraising underlined FMK's role as the vanguard of the anti-war movement. They gained support from various political youth organisations such as Socialist Youth Front (*Sosialistisk Ungdomsforbund* or SUF), the Norwegian Communist Party (*Norges Kommunistiske Parti* or NKP), the Oslo chapter of the Workers' Youth League (*Arbeidernes Ungdomsfylking* or AUF) and the Young Liberals of Norway (*Unge Venstre* or NUV). The Norwegian branch of the Women's International Strike for Peace and the Norwegian Student's Society (*Det Norske Studentersamfund*) also played an active role in the anti-war movement.

One of the earliest and most dramatic manifestations of this unease emerged on university campuses in the form of "teach-ins". The anti-war movement arranged several teach-ins in opposition to the Vietnam War at the University of Oslo.<sup>69</sup> The teach-ins became a way to express opposition to the way in which the war was conducted and was a mix of direct-

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<sup>66</sup> Godbolt, "A Picture and a Protest", p. 300.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 306.

<sup>68</sup> Førland and Korsvik, *1968: Opprør og motkultur på norsk*, p. 27.

<sup>69</sup> Friheten, 14.04.1966.

action protests and academic seminars. They tended to evolve into a vehicle for anti-Vietnam War protesters.<sup>70</sup> More importantly, the teach-ins helped to create a sort of “market for information”, and ultimately challenged government policy in a way that would prove to be important over time. Moreover, teach-ins were of great importance in the Norwegian debate on the Vietnam issue and the subsequent anti-war activism. It helped to circulate information about the conflict and functioned as a forum for discussion of a range of perceptions and nuances regarding the US-Vietnam War.<sup>71</sup> For the participants, on the other hand, it proved to be an exhilarating and energising experience and it helped to invigorate the emerging anti-war movement attracting students to join the anti-war movement and its cause.<sup>72</sup>

In the course of the conflict, the anti-war movement became radicalised – especially as disillusionment with the war reached the greater public. The escalation of the war in Vietnam was also accompanied by a growing domestic debate on America’s military involvement. Moreover, the increasing numbers of casualties, both civilian and military, were reported, yet still the US military demanded more troops which added fuel to the fire of the anti-war movement. The anti-war movement stood in the solidarity with Third World, countries that saw the US military forces as foreign intruders. The anti-war movement saw the US involvement in Vietnam as an obstacle to freedom, democracy and civil rights. At the same time, they saw the brutality of the war and the rising death toll of young soldiers and civilians as proving it to be a worthless cause. The conflict pinpointed the on-going dilemma facing foreign policy-makers and the consciousness of people: balancing between solidarity with a Third World liberation movement and loyalty to a NATO ally, the United States.<sup>73</sup>

The anti-war movement prompted a transformation that led many to adopt a revolutionary anti-capitalistic outlook. The radicalisation ran both broad and deep – particularly as many of the activists were in solidarity with the Third World.<sup>74</sup> The combination of social, political and economic development lead to a situation where social development was driven by new dynamics and social actors whom emphasised collective actions as mean to achieve social

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<sup>70</sup> Hall, *Rethinking the American Anti-War Movement*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>71</sup> Godbolt, “Den norske Vietnambevegelsen”, p. 79.

<sup>72</sup> Wells, *The Wars Within: America’s Battle over Vietnam*, pp. 36-38.

<sup>73</sup> Godbolt, Holmestad Larsen and Hein Rasmussen, “The Vietnam War: The Danish and Norwegian Experience 1964-1975”, p.405.

<sup>74</sup> Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals turn to Lenin, Mao and Che*, p. 37.

change. In many ways, the anti-war movement can be seen as a critical agent of social change and of future social relations.<sup>75</sup>

The Norwegian historian, Tor Egil Førland, defined the radicalisation of the 1960s as “*piecemeal and peaceful*”.<sup>76</sup> Førland indicated that the anti-war movement in Norway was different and distinctive compared to what emerged in other countries such as the United States – but at the same time, similar. During the conflict, the Norwegian anti-war movement became a politicised solidarity movement, whose non-protest actions were peaceful rather than violent. Anarchist ideas existed in the anti-war movement – just without the confrontational elements. The anti-Vietnam War movement drew inspiration mostly from earlier traditions of peace activism. The peace movement that re-emerged during the late 1950s and the early 1960s shaped it decisively.<sup>77</sup>

The anti-war movement was organised in terms of goals and means. To a very large extent, the protest movement consisted of pressure groups that used unorthodox methods to convey messages to decision-makers at the *Storting*.<sup>78</sup> The anti-war movement initially started on an ad hoc basis, but later divided into different factions. Despite these divisions, they all had a common theme – criticism of the United States and the demand for negotiations that could put an end to the conflict. The messages the activists conveyed had pacifist and humanitarian motives. Another crucial factor that contributed to the emergence of the anti-war movement was the extensive political and cultural consensus one could find in Norwegian society. During the 1960s, there was a political culture of broad compromises, which emphasised integration of diverse groups and ensuring that they were included in the decision-making process.<sup>79</sup> The social democratic hegemony allowed people to participate and influence the political process.

Through the anti-war movement, the youth had a separate platform to voice their opinions and ideas – not only regarding the US-Vietnam War debate, but also in the debate of Norway and its membership in the NATO. This debate underlined how complicated and deeply entangled the Vietnam issue really was. Norway’s status as one of the founding members of NATO,

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<sup>75</sup> Phillon, “Bridging the Gap between New Social Movements”, p. 80.

<sup>76</sup> Førland, “1968 in Norway: Piecemeal, Peaceful and Postmodern”, p. 383.

<sup>77</sup> Hall, *Rethinking the American Anti-War Movement*, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> Jørgensen, *Transformation and Crises: the Left and the Nation in Denmark and Sweden 1956-1980*, pp. 240-241.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

allying with the United States, further shaped the debate on the Vietnam issue. With the US-Vietnam War lingering in the background, the debate about Norway as a NATO member state and its moral and ethical responsibilities became central. Besides, as the war waged on, the international image of the US weakened, and this had undermined the support from NATO allies. The US-Vietnam War caused a conflicted triangular relationship between the United States, Vietnam and Norway.

The anti-war movement in Norway became a recruiting ground for left-wing activists. It is through the anti-war movement that we see central and global features of the 1960s. The US-Vietnam War supplied the background and context to the anti-war movement. The anti-war movement did not only promote the demands of the protestors but also individual rights, especially civil and political rights. The anti-war movement highlighted the moral and ethical responsibility that one has as a human being.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Jørgensen, *Transformation and Crises: the Left and the Nation in Denmark and Sweden 1956-1980*, pp. 259.

## **2. Rivalry, Disunity and Collaboration within the Anti-War Movement**

As mentioned in the introduction, the Norwegian Workers' Youth League was one of Norway's largest political youth organisations in Norway. In comparison to other political youth organisations, the Workers' Youth League gathered resources and mobilised in the protests against the US-Vietnam War early on. It first started as a small opposition in the Workers' Youth League, initiated by the local chapter of Oslo. One can thus argue that the Workers' Youth League commenced the emergence of the anti-war movement in Norway.

The activists managed to organise street marches and other anti-war activities because they were able to draw on pre-existing intellectual traditions, organisations, and networks of other activists, and the experience of an earlier generation of leaders.<sup>81</sup> Despite of the Workers' Youth League's strong position in the anti-war movement, several independent anti-war movement organisations were established during this time period.<sup>82</sup> The question of who would represent the North Vietnamese in the struggle of the US-Vietnam War became complicated.

Subsequently, there were several other political youth organisations that supported the Workers' Youth League in the anti-war movement. There is no doubt that the tragic events of the US-Vietnam War inspired a whole generation of future leaders who rose to the occasion and became the face of a social movement. The youth was inspired by Fidel Castro's revolution in Cuba, moved by the idealist rhetoric of President John F. Kennedy, and captivated by the struggle for freedom in North Vietnam. For that reason, this chapter will focus on the key events that shaped and defined the anti-war movement while highlighting the role of the Workers' Youth League. The series of key events underline the sense of drama and diversity within the anti-war activism between 1965 and 1973. In order to have a clear and concise overview of what happened in this crucial time period, the chapter will be divided into four sections.

The first section will look at the early phase of the anti-war movement, which was arguably from 1965 to 1967. It will examine how the growing opposition in the Workers' Youth

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<sup>81</sup> Hall, *Rethinking the American Anti-War Movement*, p. 9.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.



League urged the leadership to adapt a stricter policy that criticised the United States' involvement in Vietnam and hence take the lead role in the emerging anti-war movement. The second section of the chapter will look at the crucial time period from 1968 to 1971. This time period was in sharp contrast with the previous as it was affected by a series of disputes and rivalries that affected the League's role in the movement. The third section will investigate the time period from 1972 to 1973, the end phase, before the anti-war movement dissolved. While the final and last section will look at the impact of the anti-war movement had upon the Norwegian domestic politics. As this chapter will demonstrate, the anti-war movement proved to be an effective opposition to the war in Vietnam and quickly transformed into a bastion of political power and influence under the leadership of the Norwegian youth.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Hall, *Rethinking the American Anti-War Movement*, p. 133.

## **2.1 The Workers' Youth League's Role in the Emerging Anti-War Movement in Norway 1965-1967**

This first section will, as mentioned, examine the role of the Workers' Youth League in the early phase of the protests against the US-Vietnam War. Furthermore, it will look at its conflicted and contested relationship with the Norwegian Labour Party due to their contrasting views on the US-Vietnam War. The relationship between the two became further complicated when the opposition youth wing pursued alliances with other political youth organisations with the establishment of solidarity organisations and committees. Additionally, the conflict caused difficulties between the opposition led by the local chapter of Oslo and the leadership of the Workers' Youth League itself.

The rise of the anti-war movement affected the Norwegian political parties, both internally and in regard to the dynamics of parliamentary politics. The Labour Party was the first to feel the shocks of the anti-war movement.<sup>84</sup> This time period was a crucial phase in the history of the anti-war movement. The time period from 1965 to 1967 includes three significant turning points, which were the commencement, breakthrough and the peak of the movement.

### **The Rise of Youth Power: the Workers Youth League and the Labour Party Collide**

In February 1965, the United States launched an intensive campaign, 'Rolling Thunder', against the North Vietnamese. The incident signified an aggressive escalation of the conflict.<sup>85</sup> The military campaign triggered the very first wave of protests against the United States' involvement in Vietnam in Norway. The public protests consisted of a series of both legal and illegal ad hoc actions and lasted almost a month.<sup>86</sup>

The first wave of protests encouraged people, particularly the young, to debate the US involvement in Vietnam. Not surprisingly, the US-Vietnam War was one of the topics that dominated at the annual Workers' Youth League national meeting in March 1965.<sup>87</sup> At that time, the chairman of the Oslo chapter of the Workers' Youth League, Bjørn Skogstad Aamo was an opponent of the conflict and later, also against Norway's membership in NATO because it required a close relationship with the United States.

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<sup>84</sup> Godbolt, Holmested Larsen and Hein Rasmussen, "The Vietnam War: The Danish and Norwegian Experience 1964-1975", p. 409.

<sup>85</sup> Atwood, *The Vietnam War: a Concise International History*, p. 89.

<sup>86</sup> Godbolt, *Den norske Vietnambevegelsen*, p. 28.

<sup>87</sup> Nyhamar, *Nye utfordringer: 1965 – 2000*, p. 88.

He also voiced his concerns during the national meeting of the Labour Party later that year. During the Party's national meeting, he argued, "the US bombings in Vietnam has shaken us. It has destroyed the illusion among us, young people. The party should express its strong condemnation of the action happening in Vietnam. Thus, a foreign policy statement should clearly state our disappointment".<sup>88</sup>

Furthermore, Skogstad Aamo used Norway's NATO membership in the debate on the Vietnam issue. He argued that Norwegians had a moral and ethical responsibility to express their concerns and criticisms to the United States. Skogstad Aamo argued that Norway, as one of the founding members of the alliance, was obligated to inform its most important ally that it was on the wrong course in pursuing the conflict, and that its involvement in Vietnam and the rest of the Southeast Asia region, was a great mistake.<sup>89</sup> Skogstad Aamo did not only take a stance on the brutal warfare methods that were used by the US military forces, but he also attacked the very foundation of US involvement in Vietnam. He described the US presence in Vietnam first and foremost as a "brutal abuse of power and a treat to the world peace".<sup>90</sup> Thus, he and the opposition in the Workers' Youth League did not view the US presence in Vietnam as a necessary measure to stop the further spread of communist aggression.<sup>91</sup>

The radical standpoint of Skogstad Aamo was later adopted as one of the Workers' Youth League's policies on the Vietnam issue. However, the radical and controversial policy clearly broke away from the Norwegian Labour Party and their stance towards the US-Vietnam War. The League's policy on the US involvement in Vietnam was just one of the first steps towards breaking away from the Party and thus creating their own path in Norwegian domestic politics. As time progressed, the League quickly embraced its role as the leading figure of the rising anti-war movement in the capital. Underlining their role in the anti-war movement, the League co-organised with the Norwegian Student's Society the first and official public protest on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1965.<sup>92</sup>

There is no doubt that the youth wanted to lead the Workers' Youth League in new directions and encourage the use of different strategies. However, this had a price and it proved to be

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<sup>88</sup> AAB, The Labour Party, Protocols of the proceedings of the National Meeting May 1965.

<sup>89</sup> Godbolt, "AUF og protesten mot Vietnamkrigen – Opprør og kontinuitet", p. 58.

<sup>90</sup> Nyhamar, *Nye utfordringer: 1965 – 2000*, p. 88.

<sup>91</sup> AAB, the Workers' Youth League, AUFs beretning 1964-1967.

<sup>92</sup> Arbeiderbladet, 12.03.1965

more difficult and complicated than expected. Not surprisingly, the League and the Party collided on the Vietnam issue. As the conflict went on, the Vietnam issue caused internal power struggles. To a certain extent, it caused a political earthquake in Norwegian domestic politics.

The Party Secretary of the Norwegian Labour Party, Haakon Lie, was not happy about the growing divisions between the Labour Party and the Workers' Youth League regarding the debate on the Vietnam issue. The Labour Party was known to be extremely loyal to the United States after the Second World War. However, as the youth wing started to put political pressure on the leadership of the Party, criticism of the United States involvement in Vietnam prevailed. The volume and intensity of the criticism further increased.

The Labour Party, like most other Norwegian political parties, accepted the US explanation as to what had led to the start of the US-Vietnam War and its political context. According to the US, the conflict in Vietnam was solely about halting expanding communist influence in Southeast Asia – a growing threat, especially after the Korean War. Hence, Vietnam was seen as the next piece in the 'domino theory'.<sup>93</sup> The Workers' Youth League distanced themselves from this viewpoint. The contested relationship that sprung up due to the Vietnam issue underlined the great generational gap between the two.

Consequently, the Workers' Youth League's increasing participation in the anti-war movement was not well received by the leadership of the Labour Party. They were particularly sceptical about the methods and strategies that were used for raising awareness of the Vietnam issue. The leadership of the Party regarded the movement as a group of rebellious and radicalised youths. Moreover, the League's involvement questioned the Party's legitimacy as an established authority. For that reason, they were worried about the anti-war activism, which threatened the Party's control over the youth wing and the debate on the Vietnam issue. There were also other reasons as to why the Labour Party was against the Workers' Youth League being involved with the anti-war movement. Godbolt has argued that there in fact were three other major reasons. The first was based on the use of the public protest. The leadership of the Labour Party was not pleased with the strategies that the members of the League pursued through their participation in the movement. The Labour

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<sup>93</sup> Leeson and Dean, "The Democratic Domino Theory: An Empirical Investigation", p. 533.

Party could not identify themselves with the new culture of protest that was emerging in the beginning of the 1960s. After all, the public protests often aimed to criticise the Norwegian government's policy – or in other words, policies that the Labour Party established as they were ruling power at the *Storting* at that time.

The second reason is closely related to the first. The anti-war activism that occurred in the public weakened and damaged the image of the Labour Party. For instance, many of the public protests were co-organised with other political youth organisations and anti-war movement organisations. For that reason, the Party refused to give its support to the League during the establishing phase of the movement. As one of Norway's biggest political parties, the Labour Party had a long history of being politically independent. Therefore, it required an exceptional reason to seek alliance with other political parties or organisations whom they considered to be rivals on the political spectrum.

The third and final reason as to why the Labour Party chose to distance themselves from the Vietnam issue is related to their ideological profile. As mentioned previously, the Party was extremely loyal to the United States – a relationship that they did not want to endanger. They had a close relationship despite of the United States' controversial views on social classes and racial segregation as well as their scepticism towards the growing influence of American pop-culture in Europe. Overall, the Labour Party had positive attitudes regarding the United States.<sup>94</sup> However, the uproar that the League created through their involvement in the movement had the potential to break off their relations to the United States. In order to convince the leadership of the Labour Party, the Workers' Youth League decided to attempt to gather likeminded supporters from the Party and the trade union movement. The League quickly understood that in order to make any breakthrough with the demands put forward by the anti-war movement, they had to convince their opponents.

Changes did indeed come. In May 1965, the Labour Party adopted a new policy on the US-Vietnam War during their annual national meeting. The new policy stated that both the United States and North Vietnam, in association with China, were responsible as drivers of the conflict.<sup>95</sup> The Workers' Youth League was still not pleased. The League viewed the United States as the sole driver of the conflict. However, the new policy indicated that there was

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<sup>94</sup> Godbolt, "AUF og protesten mot Vietnamkrigen – Opprør og kontinuitet", pp. 58-59.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

growing acceptance for different views on the US-Vietnam War within the Party. It also showed that the Party had taken some notice of the debates among the left-wing politicians.

The US-Vietnam War became a crucial part of the daily life of many students and the youth in general. The conflict raised many questions and triggered debates regarding views of authorities and values in an advanced, Western, capitalist society, which produced a wide generational gap. The former Labour Party leader Reiluf Steen argued, “the US-Vietnam War impacted the perceptions, attitudes and actions of a whole generation of youth”.<sup>96</sup> By joining the anti-war movement, the young demanded a new foreign policy assessment, which also contributed to new, critical views on established power structures that existed in society.<sup>97</sup> The Workers’ Youth League strongly believed that one could achieve change through the power of a grassroots movement. In their eyes, a grassroots movement could prevent future conflicts as well as dealing with domestic problems at home, such as poverty, discrimination and inequality.<sup>98</sup> The changes could create fundamental new ways to discuss and initiate debates on foreign affairs and domestic security issues in the public sphere.<sup>99</sup>

The US-Vietnam War became an important source of influence and power in Norwegian domestic politics. It even caused an inner political power struggle.<sup>100</sup> The Labour Party realised that if they more deeply engaged with the debate on Vietnam issue, they could manage to get to some degree, control of the debate including the radicalisation among the youth in the League. As result, the Party could direct the debate on the Vietnam issue in a way that did not undermine their loyalty towards the United States.

### **Dispute of the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam**

In the meantime, the pacifist organisation *Folkereisning mot krig* (FMK), the Norwegian branch of ‘War Resisters International’ purchased the Vietnam Picture. The Vietnam Picture was later sold and the donation was the first contribution to a large, humanitarian charity designed to aid the civilian population of Vietnam. Their initiative in starting the fundraising assured that they had a strong voice in the Vietnam issue and thus, gained a prominent role in the anti-war movement. The organisation was relatively small, and it appeared that they did

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<sup>96</sup> Steen, *Maktkamp. Nye bilder fra et liv*, p. 89-90.

<sup>97</sup> Halvorsen, *Partiets salt: AUFs historie*, p. 342.

<sup>98</sup> Hall, *Rethinking the American Anti-War Movement*, p. 100.

<sup>99</sup> Halvorsen, *Partiets salt: AUFs historie*, p. 342.

<sup>100</sup> Godbolt, “AUF og protesten mot Vietnamkrigen – Opprør og kontinuitet”, pp. 60-61.

not have the necessary resources or the capacity to lead the movement further. To add to this, there were signs that the FMK was not politically capable of taking the lead of the movement, as they were not willing to take a final viewpoint on the conflict. There were increasing numbers of people who sided with and supported the National Liberation Front (NLF). They believed that the NLF would bring the conflict to an end.<sup>101</sup> This turned out to be a very difficult situation for the FMK, who wanted to stay neutral in the Vietnam issue. As the FMK left the anti-war movement, the Workers' Youth League seized the opportunity to take over and lead the emerging anti-war movement.

Like the Labour Party, the leadership of the Workers' Youth League was not thrilled about the idea of bilateral alliances with other political youth organisations or anti-war movement organisations. The opposition within the League sought to collaborate with other political youth organisations such as the Young Liberals, and the Socialist Youth Front as they were also active in the anti-war movement. According to the leadership of the League, a political alliance like this would be a sign of disunity among the labour movement.<sup>102</sup> However, when it became clear that the FMK was no longer capable of leading the anti-war movement, the political youth organisations went into talks with the opposition in the League to establish a solidarity committee.

The Solidarity Committee for Vietnam (*Solidaritetskomiteen for Vietnam* or *Solkom*) was established on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1965. The Committee consisted of five representatives from various parts from the labour movement. It had a political platform that attracted youth from the left-wing, due to its moderate use of language and its demands of a full stop to heavy bombings, and the initiation of peace negotiations and full withdrawal of all foreign military forces.<sup>103</sup>

Despite the internal disputes and conflicts within the Workers' Youth League, the anti-movement continued to evolve. The leadership of the League decided to sharpen their criticism against the United States. Therefore, the Workers' Youth League adopted a new statement regarding the US-Vietnam War at its national meeting in 1966. The peace negotiations were still central – however, the blame for the intensive warfare and increased

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<sup>101</sup> Godbolt, "AUF og protesten mot Vietnamkrigen – Opprør og kontinuitet", p. 61.

<sup>102</sup> Halvorsen, *Partiets salt: AUFs historie*, p. 344.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 345.

international tension was put solely on the United States. The new statement was based on “the stronger presence of the United States in the South and intensive bombing raids of the North”.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, it also called upon the United States to recognise the liberation movement NFL, as the rightful negotiating counterparts in a possible peace settlement.

After the national meeting, the Workers’ Youth League continued to organise and join anti-war protests. There were two major public protests that took place in 1966, which were the protests held on 4<sup>th</sup> July and those during international Human Rights Day.<sup>105</sup> These were considered to be the breakthrough pivotal protests of the anti-war movement due to the massive attention they received.<sup>106</sup> However, the activists were accused of hijacking and abusing the public holidays and what they represented in order to promote the demands and ambitions of the movement.<sup>107</sup>

Both the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam and the Norwegian Communist Party (Norges Kommunistisk Partiet or NKP) were excluded from joining the public protests. The relationship between the Committee and the leadership of the Workers’ Youth League was not positive even though the majority of the Committee came from the labour movement. The relationship between the two was unsteady mostly because of the Party Secretary of the Labour Party, Haakon Lie, who had condemned the Committee. He viewed the Committee as a cover-up organisation for communists, and therefore strictly warned all party members to stay away from any involvement with the Committee.<sup>108</sup> He made sure that he prevented any chance of collaboration between Workers’ Youth League and the Committee.

### **The Workers’ Youth League and Solidarity Committee for Vietnam Unites**

External and internal events can explain the dynamics of the anti-war movements and why it became tremendously difficult for the Workers’ Youth League to continue in excluding the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam. It became problematic because the experience of the public protests of 1966 showed that it was bilateral collaborations that turned out to be the

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<sup>104</sup> Halvorsen, *Partiets salt: AUFs historie*, p. 345.

<sup>105</sup> AAB, the Workers Youth League, *AUFs beretning 1964 – 1967*. Protocols of the proceedings of the national meetings during the time period from 1964 to 1967. There were around 2000 people who joined the demonstration outside of the American Embassy in Oslo on 4th July 1966.

<sup>106</sup> Godbolt, “AUF og protesten mot Vietnamkrigen – Opprør og kontinuitet”, p. 60.

<sup>107</sup> Godbolt, *Den norske Vietnambevegelsen*, p. 100.

<sup>108</sup> Godbolt, “AUF og protesten mot Vietnamkrigen – Opprør og kontinuitet”, p. 64.



driving force behind successful anti-war actions, also in the years to come.<sup>109</sup> It had given birth to several inter-political groups and anti-war movement organisations. It would be unwise and unreasonable of the leadership of the League to not to show support to the Committee in facilitating collaborations like that. By not showing its support, the League risked losing their legitimacy in the anti-war movement. In other words, it was a political necessity for the leadership of the League to start to collaborate with the Committee.

In addition, another crucial reason as to why the League suddenly sought alliance with the Committee was that the FMK was losing organisational control of the anti-war movement, which was briefly noted above. After the protest on the International Human Rights Day on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1966, the FMK more or less disappeared from the movement. The Workers' Youth League lost their most important supporter in the competition against the Committee. Moreover, the League's moderating influence on the Committee made it more palatable for supporters from the labour movement to accept the Committee as a vital partner of the movement. The rocky relationship between the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam and the leadership of the Workers' Youth League was not only caused by Haakon Lie, but also because of the contrasting viewpoints on the US-Vietnam War. They also differed on which political strategies that should be used to shape and change the public opinion.<sup>110</sup>

The public protests that took place on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1967 were some of the most remarkable incidents in the history of the Norwegian anti-war movement. The protest also represented the peak of the movement.<sup>111</sup> The protests received a lot of attention because the date was associated with the events of the same day in 1940, when Nazi Germany invaded Norway. Accordingly, parallels were drawn between Norway and North Vietnam. North Vietnam's struggle for independence was thus compared to when the Nazi Germans occupied Norway during the Second World War. The participants mocked the United States and honoured the NLF throughout the protest. The NLF's struggle against the United States was viewed in the same light as the Norwegian resistance against its occupying power.<sup>112</sup> In contrast to the year before, the Workers' Youth League, the Young Liberals and the Socialist Youth Front joined with the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam at the demonstration. Because of the radical components, the Norwegian press condemned the protest and politicians from several political

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<sup>109</sup> Godbolt, "AUF og protesten mot Vietnamkrigen – Opprør og kontinuitet", p. 67.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>111</sup> Arbeiderbladet, 10.04.1967.

<sup>112</sup> Godbolt, *Den norske Vietnambevegelsen*, p. 144.

parties joined in criticism against the youth. Still, it appeared that the League's position on the Vietnam issue was closer to that of the public, compared to the politicians at the *Storting*.

There were several members of the labour movement who participated in the anti-war movement by 1967. It signalled that the Workers' Youth League was successful in building bridges between the anti-war movement and rest of the labour movement. Hence, the difference of opinion regarding the Vietnam issue was narrowing. The radical change of attitudes was highlighted at the national meeting of the Labour Party in 1967. Here, the Labour Party decided to take a clear and final standpoint on the Vietnam issue through an adoption of new resolution.<sup>113</sup> The resolution stated as following: "The Norwegian Labour Party is abandoning the US government policy regarding Vietnam. Furthermore, the Party give its full support to the forces in the United States who opposes and who advocates for the de-escalation of the war."<sup>114</sup> The resolution broke off their long history of loyalty to the United States. It gave a major boost to anti-war movement in the debate on the Vietnam issue because it legitimised its voice and more importantly, it also legitimised a new interpretation of the US-Vietnam War.<sup>115</sup>

The resolution was viewed as a revolution within the Labour Party. The breakthrough illustrated that the radical opposition had been able to pressure the leadership into suppressing its doubts regarding the Party's view on the US-Vietnam War. The change was a result of external circumstances that forced the Party to change its position.<sup>116</sup> As with the League, there was also a radicalisation among the Labour Party, many deciding to side with the NLF in the US-Vietnam War. There were also other momentous points at the national meeting besides the new policy. The manifesto on foreign policy was also changed, with the leadership of the Party willing to compromise with the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam. By compromising, they felt that they would reach a breakthrough in their deliberations on NATO and the European Economic Community (ECC).<sup>117</sup>

The Labour Party had drastically changed its attitudes towards the United States' involvement in Vietnam within a period of two years. It was the growing but determined, opposition in the

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<sup>113</sup> AAB, the Workers' Youth League, *AUFs beretning 1967-1969*. Protocols of the proceedings of the national meetings during the time period from 1967 to 1969.

<sup>114</sup> AAB, The Labour Party, *Protocols of the Proceedings of the National Meeting of May 1967*.

<sup>115</sup> Melle, "Den lange opinionskrigen", p. 325.

<sup>116</sup> Godbolt, *Den norske Vietnambevegelsen*, p. 47.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

Party directed by the Workers' Youth League that caused the transformation. The transformation also underlined that there was a considerable change in attitudes and perceptions among members of the party. It forced the Party to take a clear and final viewpoint on the conflict.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, the relationship between the Solidarity Committee and the Workers' Youth League including the Labour Party was stable, and thus, they managed to gain a hegemonic position in the anti-war movement. The anti-war activities were stronger as they were now co-organised with established organisations without political competition.<sup>119</sup> However, the coherence in the anti-war movement did not last long.

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<sup>118</sup> Halvorsen, *Partiets salt: AUFs historie*, p. 346.

<sup>119</sup> Godbolt, *Den norske Vietnambevegelsen*, p. 70.

## **2.2 The Coalition Breaches: The Workers' Youth League and the Anti-War Movement Retaliate 1968-1971**

The time period from 1968 to 1971 is characterised as a critical phase in the history of the Norwegian anti-war movement. The phase was filled with political rivalry and tension between the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam and a newly emerged solidarity organisation, the Vietnam Movement in Norway. The rivalry between the two solidarity organisations resulted in an uncontrolled split. Therefore, the time period is characterised by the lack of coherence within the anti-war movement. The state of the anti-war movement at this time period was in sharp contrast with what occurred during the previous phase of the movement.

After 1967, the anti-war activism reduced, especially the public protests, and most of the activists withdrew. After an intense period of public protests and anti-war activism, there was a need to rest and to restructure the framework of the movement.<sup>120</sup> This is what the anti-war movement did. The constant mobilisation came at a price and it had worn out the activists. Therefore, from 1968 and onwards, the Workers' Youth League and the rest of the anti-war movement decided to focus on rebuilding the organisational structure of the movement, networking, and strengthening and promoting their political profile.

### **Disunity in the Solidarity Committee of Vietnam**

The unity between the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam and the Worker' was only short-lived. In 1967, the Committee became divided at its first national meeting. Norwegian historians generally agree that there was in fact, a coup led by the Maoists from the Socialist Youth Front.<sup>121</sup> Most of the Workers' Youth League watched what happened at the national meeting with dismay.

The disunity of the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam greatly affected the Workers' Youth League. Up to that point, the League had managed to balance between anti-war activism and its traditional political work as a political youth organisation. Nevertheless, the incident at the Committee's national meeting forced the League to take a break from anti-war activism and instead, join organisations from the labour movement. What distinguished the Workers' Youth League from other youths in the anti-war movement was the fact that they had close ties to influential political institutions and organisations connected to the "Labour Sphere" in

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<sup>120</sup> Godbolt, *Den norske Vietnambevegelsen*, p. 201.

<sup>121</sup> Godbolt, "AUF og protesten mot Vietnamkrigen – Opprør og kontinuitet", p. 72.

Norway. Consequently, their close relations gave them a unique opportunity to influence and shape the Norwegian domestic politics. This kind of opportunity was out of reach for many political youth organisations and other anti-war organisation groups who participated the anti-war movement. However, the Workers' Youth League was also impacted by a series of other incidents. The League was the most weakened by the events of the CIA-ILUSY Scandal in 1968. It involved money being transferred from the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to the International Union of Youth (IUSY), where the League had been very active.<sup>122</sup> The revelation shook the League.

At the same time, there were also other international issues and debates that occupied the Workers' Youth League – particularly regarding Norway's membership in NATO. The opponents of NATO were slowly rising in the League. Norway had been a member of the military alliance since its creation in 1949 – however, its membership was soon expiring, and it had to decide whether it wanted to extend or terminate its membership by 1969.<sup>123</sup> The opponents of the League wanted Norway to terminate its membership with the alliance. Their disapproval of Norway's membership was tied to the fact that the United States was one of the leading forces behind the alliance. The radical and rebellious youth were anti-imperialist and saw the US involvement in Vietnam and rest of the Southeast Asia as dangerous. Like the Vietnam issue, the NATO issue led to a series of internal conflicts and disputes within the League and later brought the League in collision with the Labour Party.<sup>124</sup> In contrast to the Vietnam issue, where the League had effectively managed to reverse the Party's attitudes, the campaign against NATO had just, barely begun. Abruptly, the League had to redirect all its resources and strengths to endorse the “Norway out of NATO” campaign.

The public protests also stalled because of the state of the conflict itself. In the spring of 1968 the Tet Offensive changed the nature of the stalemate.<sup>125</sup> The military campaign persuaded the US President Johnson to end his policy of gradual escalation of military warfare. The incident forced Washington and Hanoi to start negotiations on a peace settlement.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Dagbladet, 15.06.1968. The scandal was brought to light by an article that was published in Dagbladet. The article was written by two of League's members, Per Olav Marcussen and Jens Otto Hauge.

<sup>123</sup> Halvorsen, *Partiets salt: AUFs historie*, p. 359.

<sup>124</sup> Godbolt, “AUF og protesten mot Vietnamkrigen – Opprør og kontinuitet”, pp. 72-73.

<sup>125</sup> Atwood, *The Vietnam War: a Concise International History*, p. 115.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

Furthermore, the disunity had severe consequences for the Workers' Youth League as a political youth organisation. The League was already in a period of poor recruitment and the disunity did not improve the situation. The League was strongly visible and present throughout the first phase of the anti-war movement from 1965 to 1967. Thus, the League continuously demonstrated to the public that they opposed the US policy in Vietnam and were at the right side of the conflict. Their commitment to the Vietnam issue operated as a barometer for international solidarity and moral values.<sup>127</sup> However, with its absence, the solidarity of the anti-war movement weakened.

The radicalised youth formed the Workers' Youth League. The radicalisation was particularly notable because of its constant focus on the campaign against US imperialism. As the League came under the influence of the adults through its close relationship through the debate on the Vietnam issue – it lost its appeal among the young. The League became excluded from many of the important recruitment arenas in political youth organisations from 1967 to 1975.<sup>128</sup> Yet, the League never completely stopped its anti-war activism, however it now operated in a slightly different political context.

### **...And a New Solidarity Organisation arises**

The disunity of the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam caused the emergence of a new solidarity organisation, the so-called Vietnam Movement in Norway (*Vietnambevegelsen i Norge*).<sup>129</sup> It was a direct offshoot of the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam. The new solidarity organisation was initiated by a group of members from the Labour Party and other parts of the labour movement.<sup>130</sup> They strongly believed that a new solidarity organisation was needed to provide a fresh new start. The committee of the new solidarity organisation included representatives from the Workers' Youth League, the Young Liberals, liberal students associations and the Norwegian Communist Party, but the majority of the committee were adults from the trade union movement.<sup>131</sup> The League's work on the Vietnam issue was

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<sup>127</sup> Godbolt, "AUF og protesten mot Vietnamkrigen – Opprør og kontinuitet", p. 73.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> ABB, the Workers' Youth League, *AUFs beretninger 1967-1969*. Protocols of the proceedings of the national meetings during the time period from 1967 to 1969. It was decided that the League could no longer collaborate with the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam. Thus, they sent invitations to various trade unions and labour movement organisations to create a new solidarity committee organisation that would later constitute the Vietnam Movement in Norway.

<sup>130</sup> Godbolt, "AUF og protesten mot Vietnamkrigen – Opprør og kontinuitet", p. 73.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p.74.

now mainly communicated and organised through the Vietnam Movement in Norway. The solidarity movement was therefore now split into two rival organisations.<sup>132</sup>

In contrast with other anti-war movement organisations, the Vietnam Movement in Norway did not originate from the same foundation of youth revolts. Yet, it was critical and radical and had a similar content to the previous traditional organisations formed by the labour movement. Even though the demands that both solidarity organisations forwarded were almost identical, the Vietnam Movement in Norway was determined that their strategy would be different than that of the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam.<sup>133</sup> However, despite the attempt of the Vietnam Movement in Norway to aim for a different strategy, they did not quite manage to become an outspoken solidarity organisation in the same way as the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam did before the disunity. But it did attract much support from the social democrats and labour movement and as well as from the NKP, SUF, other peace organisations and most of the political youth organisations apart from the Maoists.<sup>134</sup>

Another important factor, which contributed to the weakening of the anti-war movement, was the question of who should control it? In other words, the struggle between the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam and Vietnam Movement in Norway was also about influence. The rivalry can be explained by the differences that existed between the two solidarity organisations. These differences could be found in their beliefs regarding ideology, recruitment strategies and organisational structures.<sup>135</sup> Although there were major differences, the organisations shared some similarities as well.

The political competition between the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam and the Vietnam Movement fractioned and divided the anti-war movement. Their strength and effort should have been put towards the original aim of the anti-war movement – solidarity with North Vietnam. As Godbolt described it “a lot of effort was wasted in what in the aftermath appeared to be meaningless rivalry”.<sup>136</sup> Nonetheless, the rivalry gave the Vietnam Movement in Norway enough time to become a crucial and legitimate voice in the anti-war movement.

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<sup>132</sup>Godbolt, Holmsted Larsen and Hein Rasmussen, “The Vietnam War: The Danish and Norwegian Experience 1964-1975”, p. 407.

<sup>133</sup> Godbolt, “AUF og protesten mot Vietnamkrigen – Opprør og kontinuitet”, p. 75.

<sup>134</sup>Godbolt, Holmsted Larsen and Hein Rasmussen, “The Vietnam War: The Danish and Norwegian Experience 1964-1975”, p. 408.

<sup>135</sup> Godbolt, *Den norske Vietnambevegelsen*, p. 299.

<sup>136</sup> Godbolt, “AUF og protesten mot Vietnamkrigen – Opprør og kontinuitet”, p. 75.

### **The Workers' Youth League and the Anti-War Movement Re-organise and Radicalise**

As has already been pointed out, the Workers' Youth League had a prominent position in the anti-war movement because of its wide and personal networks of contacts from leading political institutions in Norway. However, their advantage also had negative consequences as well. The insider status, first and foremost, impacted their role in the anti-war movement. Their close connections risked disillusioning the young and reducing their investment in the movement. Another negative impact was that the League was viewed as a puppet of the Labour Party. In other words, the trust the League had from the young, the leading voices in the movement, was significantly weakened.

After the Labour Party adopted its new policy on the US-Vietnam War in 1967, the Workers' Youth League appeared as a watchdog rather than a provocateur. The League continued their anti-war activism by using their influence in the labour movement to lobby politicians to follow their promise to stand in solidarity with North Vietnam as the resolution expressed.<sup>137</sup>

Instead of putting resources into mobilising the youth to carry out public protests, the anti-war movement decided to focus on three areas. These areas were: publishing information, fundraising campaigns and improving the relationship between Norwegians and the North Vietnamese.<sup>138</sup> During the time period between 1968 and 1971, various parts of the anti-war movement founded a range of magazines that mainly focused at the US-Vietnam War. For instance, the Vietnam Movement in Norway founded "Vietnam-Info", which was, not surprisingly, organised by members of the Workers' League. Vietnam-Info was similar to the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam magazine, "For Vietnam". Both of the magazines had similar content and propaganda profiles, but Vietnam-Info never quite managed to be as big as For Vietnam. However, what magazines like For Vietnam and Vietnam-Info provided was an alternative source of information for its readers. More importantly, it was considered to be an effective political tool to maintain the solidarity among the current members, and also effective for recruiting new members to the anti-war movement. The most important function of the information campaign was to put forward new demands. By publishing magazines, posters, leaflets and so on, the anti-war movement informed the public of their new demands and attempted to influence public opinion.<sup>139</sup> The bombardment of information campaigns

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<sup>137</sup> Godbolt, "AUF og protesten mot Vietnamkrigen – Opprør og kontinuitet", p.76.

<sup>138</sup> Godbolt, *Den norske Vietnambevegelsen*, p. 243.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.



gave the movement an opportunity to present, explain and defend the demands in the public space.

The anti-war movement also dedicated a lot of their time to raising money through fundraising campaigns. Both the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam and the Vietnam Movement in Norway initiated large fundraising campaigns that partly competed against each other.<sup>140</sup> A large sum of the donations went to support North Vietnam or NLF-controlled areas in the South Vietnam. However, the donations also went towards the anti-war movement. A stable economy was vital in developing and continuing a protest movement. Anti-war activities such as public protests did cost the movement a lot of money. Godbolt argued that a robust economy was a necessity in launching a modern collective movement with an extensive structure of organisation such as the anti-war movement was in early 1968.<sup>141</sup> Consequently, both the Vietnam Movement in Norway and the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam were reliant on economic grants that came from trade union organisations at various levels, supplemented by memberships and gifts donated by individuals. The fundraising campaigns helped to soften the deep-rooted Norwegian scepticism towards constructing a new united and socialist state – a state that was even viewed as an enemy of the United States.

From 1966 to 1975, the solidarity organisations and trade union movement welcomed around 25 unofficial delegations from North Vietnam. The visits improved and strengthened the diplomatic relationship between Norway and North Vietnam. Taking the initiative from the Vietnam Movement in Norway, the NFL decided to open an office in Oslo in 1970.<sup>142</sup> The North Vietnamese was even allowed to have office space at the League's main office.<sup>143</sup> From the NLF office, the North Vietnamese provided an important addition to the movement's information campaign. It also served as a direct communication link between Norway and Hanoi, where its main task was to inform Norwegians about the war.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Godbolt, "AUF og protesten mot Vietnamkrigen – Opprør og kontinuitet", p. 77.

<sup>141</sup> Godbolt, *Den norske Vietnambevegelsen*, p. 202.

<sup>142</sup> AAB, the Workers' Youth League, *AUFs beretninger 1969-1970*. Protocols of the proceedings of the national meetings during the time period from 1969 to 1970.

<sup>143</sup> AAB, the Workers' Youth League, *AUFs beretninger 1969-1970*. Protocols of the proceedings of the national meetings during the time period from 1969 to 1970.

<sup>144</sup> Godbolt, *Den norske Vietnambevegelsen*, p. 253.

It was also during this critical phase of the anti-war movement that it became further radicalised.<sup>145</sup> For instance, the Workers' Youth League, through their commitment to the Vietnam issue in the Vietnam Movement in Norway, urged the leadership of the Labour Party to support the demand for Norwegian recognition of North Vietnam.<sup>146</sup> The recognition of North Vietnam and full support of the NLF were now the main demands in all anti-war actions onwards. The radicalisation among the youth can also be demonstrated by looking at other demands that emerged during this time period. This occurred because of the United States' imperialist characteristics, which became more evident as the war went on.<sup>147</sup> The radicalisation can for instance be observed through the slogans that were used during public protests. Here, slogans such as "Peace in Vietnam" was replaced with "Support the NLF" and "Victory to NLF" and were aggressively used. The Workers' Youth League also increasingly underlined their support the NLF.<sup>148</sup> Within a few years, under the influence of NLF and North Vietnam, the anti-war movement was transformed into a fully-fledged solidarity movement in support of the national liberation struggle in Vietnam.<sup>149</sup>

It was strategically wise for the anti-war activists to emphasise that the United States was not in Vietnam because of some failed administration policy. On the contrary, according to the anti-war activists, the US was an imperialist power operating on the logic of monopoly capitalism.<sup>150</sup> According to this understanding, the US operated in Vietnam because it desired economic expansion and the attainment of economic profit, rather than the liberation of Vietnam from communist aggression.<sup>151</sup>

The production, distribution and consumption of the movement's propaganda, gave the anti-war activists meaningful tasks and gave them purpose in periods when it was difficult to mobilise for public protests.<sup>152</sup> What was common was that they collectively functioned as political tool to raise awareness regarding the US-Vietnam War among the Norwegian population.

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<sup>145</sup> Halvorsen, *Partiets salt: AUFs historie*, p. 379.

<sup>146</sup> AAB, the Workers' Youth League, *AUFs beretninger 1969-1970*. Protocols of the proceedings of the national meetings during the time period from 1969 to 1970.

<sup>147</sup> Godbolt, *Den norske Vietnambevegelsen*, p. 189.

<sup>148</sup> Arbeiderbladet, 24.08.1971.

<sup>149</sup> Godbolt, "Picture and A Protest", p. 301.

<sup>150</sup> Friheten, 14.04.1966. In a short interview with the chairman of the Workers' Youth League (at the time), Ola Teigen, expressed that Vietnam was simply a puzzle in the US' power political game.

<sup>151</sup> Godbolt, *Den norske Vietnambevegelsen*, p. 190.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.

## **2.3 Towards Consolidation: the Anti-War Movement Strengthens and Re-emerges 1971-1973**

After three years of internal bickering between the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam and the Vietnam Movement in Norway, the hostility slowly faded.<sup>153</sup> The Committee finally learned that generating and continuing the protest movement was not a simple matter. Consolidation was necessary, and the movement needed something beyond a group of youths with common political beliefs and a revolutionary spirit. For that reason, the Committee decided to reach out and make amends with the Vietnam Movement in Norway once and for all.<sup>154</sup> Not only was the relationship between the two solidarity organisations repaired, but the communication between the committee and its members also improved greatly. The committee also strengthened its position and the control of its activists, supporters and anti-war activities. They made a return to the use of public protests.<sup>155</sup> From 1971, the anti-war movement re-emerged and stayed cohesive until the very end of the conflict in Vietnam. This time period of the anti-war movement was also described as the very last phase of the anti-war movement before it, as expected, disintegrated after some time.

The last section of the chapter will examine what paved the way for the anti-war movement's successful extensive consolidation and rejuvenation before most of the movement slowly dissolved from 1973 and onwards.<sup>156</sup>

### **The Anti-War Movement's End Phase**

After the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam and the Vietnam Movement in Norway re-organised and strengthened their relationship, they returned to organising massive street marches and public protests. The two solidarity organisations arranged several large joint public protests in Oslo between 1971 and 1973.<sup>157</sup> Through this process, the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam realised that it was indeed possible to compromise with its former rival. Their differences were put aside. It was felt that this was necessary in order to build a wider and more impactful protest movement and that doing so would not involve abandoning their ideological beliefs. Furthermore, the development and consolidation of the movement was not only a consequence of the internal dynamics of the movement, but also the result of

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<sup>153</sup> Godbolt, *Den norske Vietnambevegelsen*, p. 307.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., p. 213.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 297.

<sup>157</sup> Godbolt, "AUF og protesten mot Vietnamkrigen – Opprør og kontinuitet", p. 81.

external factors. At this point, the US-Vietnam conflict had become an important symbolic issue in Norwegian domestic politics. The various political parties frequently used the US-Vietnam War as a component in their internal power struggles.<sup>158</sup>

It is important to bear in mind that it was the development of the US-Vietnam War and the international protests that laid the foundation for Norwegian anti-war movement. Therefore, there was a clear connection between the development of the movement and the war – especially regarding the number of casualties.<sup>159</sup> Specific events related to the development of the war often triggered the activists to mobilise. For instance, the last wave of protests was a response to President Nixon’s policy in Vietnam. Instead of stepping down and withdrawing US military forces through a so-called “Vietnamization policy”, he ended the war with massive bombardments of North Vietnam.<sup>160</sup> The bombing campaign, ‘Operation Linebacker’, was later dubbed as the “Christmas Bombings”. Many activists believed that President Nixon halted the process of the peace settlement and therefore, purposefully prolonged the conflict and the sufferings of the civilian population. The bombing campaign shocked the world. President Nixon’s decision was met with condemnation in Congress and around the world – especially among its closest allies in Western Europe, including Norway.<sup>161</sup>

Through consolidation with its former rival and by seeking alliances with other institutional actors, the solidarity organisations groups were able to make the Vietnam issue visible in local communities, and thus managed to generate support among groups that were outside of the movement.<sup>162</sup> As a result, more and more people joined the public protests and anti-war activism. The proactive protests ensured that the US-Vietnam War remained an important moral issue in the Norwegian public sphere. The movement depended on attracting and maintaining attention. With the help of the mass media, the protests attracted a new crowd of passive members who identified themselves with the anti-war activism that they witnessed.<sup>163</sup>

The collaboration had the same effect as the provocative public protests because it prevented the Vietnam issue from losing its relevance, participants from disappearing, and the anti-war

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<sup>158</sup> Godbolt, *Den norske Vietnambevegelsen*, pp. 201-202.

<sup>159</sup> Melle, “Den langvarige opinionskrigen”, p. 317

<sup>160</sup> Atwood, *The Vietnam War: a Concise International History*, p. 158.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>162</sup> Godbolt, *Den norske Vietnambevegelsen*, p. 267.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

movement from deteriorating. The Solidarity Committee for Vietnam and the Vietnam Movement in Norway used provocation and collaboration to keep the movement going strong. Another crucial and motivating factor behind the re-emergence must be that the movement and its radical political culture, which stabilised extra-parliamentary politics, had finally been accepted as a legitimate political force. This happened despite the fact that extra-parliamentary movements like the anti-war movement had been an element of Norwegian domestic politics, long before the left-wing political wave arrived in the 1960s.<sup>164</sup>

### **The Last Triumph**

By 1973, Norway reflected a common and national consensus on the US-Vietnam War and the internal political disputes and power rivalries within the anti-war movement was almost non-existent. Furthermore, the message that the movement conveyed could be found everywhere in the public sphere.

The Vietnam Movement in Norway and the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam together organised the largest demonstration to be held at the time, in Norway.<sup>165</sup> On 19<sup>th</sup> January 1973, around 7500 people in Oslo participated in the largest single US-Vietnam War demonstration in Oslo.<sup>166</sup> Just as important was the fact that similar demonstrations, with record turnouts, occurred across the country.<sup>167</sup> The protests of 19<sup>th</sup> January 1973 and other public protests that occurred during the last phase of the anti-war movement were, as usual, directed towards the United States. However, they can also be interpreted as declarations of supports as well. The public protests were dedicated to the new left-wing political orientation in the Norwegian foreign policy. The support was particularly aimed at the Labour Party, which was in opposition at the time. The Labour Party, after a long period of political pressure by its youth wing, the Workers' Youth League, forwarded many of the demands that anti-war movement promoted.

After Per Borten's Cabinet resigned because of failed ECC membership negotiations; the Labour Party led by Trygve Bratteli returned to power at the *Storting*. Their first political act

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<sup>164</sup> Godbolt, *Den norske Vietnambevegelsen*, p. 309-310.

<sup>165</sup> Godbolt, "Vietnamprotesten i Norge: Fra ad hoc aksjonene til politisk kapital", p. 66.

<sup>166</sup> Arbeiderbladet, 20.01.1973.

<sup>167</sup> Godbolt, Holmsted Larsen and Hein Rasmussen, "The Vietnam War: The Danish and Norwegian Experience 1964-1975", p. 409.

was to recognise North Vietnam diplomatically.<sup>168</sup> The political act was strongly supported by the Workers' Youth League, who had first forwarded the idea, and the act signalled a great victory in the eyes of the anti-war movement.<sup>169</sup> The resolution was passed on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1971 by 91 votes to 45.<sup>170</sup> Norway was the first NATO member country to recognise the enemy of the United States. The act made President Nixon furious and diplomatic relations were almost broken.<sup>171</sup> The diplomatic recognition was one of most crucial and defining moments in the history of the Norwegian anti-war movement. The Norwegian government's decision to establish diplomatic relations with North Vietnam underscored the success of the Workers' Youth League role in the anti-war movement and the true power of a protest movement. The act illustrated that the youth and the anti-war movement were ahead of the decision-makers, and the adults followed in the steps of the young. Not surprisingly, the Norwegian anti-war movement disintegrated when the American military forces withdrew and North Vietnamese forces captured the South Vietnamese capital of Saigon, forcing the South Vietnam government to capitulate at the end of April 1975.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> AAB, the Labour Party, *the Protocols of the Proceedings of the National Meeting 9th – 11th May 1971*. The Resolution was suggested and forwarded during this national meeting.

<sup>169</sup> AAB, the Workers' Youth League, *AUFs beretninger 1971-1972*. Protocols of the proceedings of the national meetings during the time period from 1971 to 1972.

<sup>170</sup> Melle, "Den Lange Opinionskrigen", p. 335.

<sup>171</sup> Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945: From "Empire" by Invitation to Transatlantic Drift*, p. 160.

<sup>172</sup> Atwood, *The Vietnam War: a Concise International History*, pp.167-168.

## 2.4 The Impact of the Norwegian Anti-War Movement

The Norwegian anti-war movement is an intricate phenomenon. The US-Vietnam War did indeed take place far away from the Norwegian daily life and had practically no significance when it came to Norwegian interests. Still, the conflict prompted the emergence of the anti-war movement and the interactions that followed had tremendous consequences for Norwegian domestic politics.

The question of whether the Norwegian anti-war movement had an impact on, or indirectly helped in ending the conflict in Vietnam – is a question that is challenging to answer. For the historian Tom Wells, the anti-war movement was one of the most remarkable and successful movements in modern history. It first and foremost played a major role in restricting and deescalating the conflict in Vietnam. Moreover, he also claimed that if the opponents of the war had not taken their message onto the streets – the ever-increasing numbers of casualties would continue to rise, and destruction would have been greater.<sup>173</sup> Part of the problem of answering this question, is that we cannot know how things would have been if an anti-war movement had not emerged. Therefore, it is simply impossible to understand precisely the impact of anti-war movements, such as the one that occurred in Norway.<sup>174</sup> Furthermore, it is incredibly difficult to disentangle the impact of the anti-war activity from political decisions that affected Norway's role on the Vietnam issue in international affairs.

It is indeed challenging to definitively prove that the anti-war movement influenced the debate on the Vietnam issue in Norway. However, if one examines the timeline of the movement and the change in public opinion, it appears that it was likely some connection. The public opinion in Norway, which was measured by various opinion polls throughout the course of the war, suggests that there was a drastic change. Therefore, there are good reasons for one to claim that the Norwegian anti-war movement actually influenced the public opinion and thus, managed to shape and change the Norwegian governments' decisions regarding the Vietnam issue. The Workers' Youth League particularly attempted to create a public opinion that was against the US involvement in Vietnam and supported a peaceful resolution to the conflict.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Hall, *Rethinking the American Anti-War Movement*, p. 137.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>175</sup> AAB, the Workers' Youth League, *AUFs beretning 1967 – 1969*. Protocols of the proceedings of the national meetings during the time period from 1967 to 1969.

In an opinion poll from March 1966, 47 per cent of the participants of the survey supported the US involvement in Vietnam, while 36 per cent wanted the US to leave.<sup>176</sup> The opinion poll indicated that the majority of the Norwegian population supported the Norwegian foreign policy on the US-Vietnam War, which was unconditional support to the United States. Nonetheless, the Norwegian public opinion radically changed, merely a year later. According to an opinion poll from August 1967, 44 per cent wanted the Americans to withdraw, while only 25 per cent wanted them to remain in Vietnam.<sup>177</sup> The opinion poll was consistent with what occurred during that time period. Once the war escalated and continued to drag on, criticism against the United States became widespread.<sup>178</sup> Moreover, the strong presence of the anti-war movement encouraged people to participate in public protests and the debate on the Vietnam issue.

There was some evidence that indicated that the anti-war activism did have positive effects on the Norwegian population. Interestingly, in an opinion poll from May 1967, 46 per cent of the participants favoured the activists' use of 9<sup>th</sup> April as a day to protest against the conflict in Vietnam.<sup>179</sup> Some saw the comparison to the Nazi Germany's invasion of Norway seen as too "extreme", especially among the older generation who had lived to experience the Second World War.

Still, the shift in public opinion on the US-Vietnam War would be highlighted in line with the massive protests during the final years of the anti-war movement – especially in connection with President Nixon's infamous "Christmas bombings" in 1972. It appeared that the majority of the Norwegian population listened and eventually approved the demands and favoured the messages that the movement conveyed. Towards the end of the conflict, both adults and the youth were participating actively in the movement. The increasing participation indicated that the US' conduct in the war led more Norwegians to sympathise with the suffering civilian population and the liberation movement, NFL and other North Vietnamese-controlled areas in South Vietnam.

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<sup>176</sup> Alstad, *Norske meninger: 1946 – 1993*, p. 68.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>178</sup> Godbolt, Holmsted Larsen and Hein Rasmussen, "The Vietnam War: The Danish and Norwegian Experience 1964-1975" p. 405.

<sup>179</sup> Alstad, *Norske meninger: 1946 – 1993*, p. 69.



There was no doubt in that the US-Vietnam War became an important part of the political identity for many youths who were active in the anti-war movement during the mid-1960s and early 1970s.<sup>180</sup> Their identity was shaped and formed by the anti-war activism and social structures that occurred within the movement. The US-Vietnam War thus formed much of this generation. Moreover, the youth were allowed to take part in the institutionalisation of what they, and the rest of the left wing had worked towards, which was solidarity with North Vietnam.<sup>181</sup>

The influence of the movement was strong, and it did exist for several years afterwards. The movement evolved into a lobbyist organisation. In the final phase, the movement can be viewed as a precursor to the modern NGOs in foreign and aid policy fields. As the movement was lead by the next generation of future leaders in society, it was a short way to influential positions in the Norwegian society such as the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NORAD (Norwegian Agency for Development).

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<sup>180</sup> Godbolt, "AUF og protesten mot Vietnamkrigen: Opprør og kontinuitet", p. 81.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

### 3. Analysis and Conclusions

This thesis has closely examined the rise of the youth and the role played by the Norwegian Workers' Youth League in the protest against the US-Vietnam War during the time period from 1965 to 1973. By looking at the historical development of the Norwegian anti-war movement, it is evident that the League did indeed have a vocal role in debate over the Vietnam issue and by that, managed to establish a prominent role in the wider movement. The League acted as one of the crucial catalysts for the emergence of the anti-war movement in Norway. It was first and foremost the Oslo chapter of the League, which was the main force behind the radical viewpoint on the Vietnam issue. They advocated for and pursued to convince the leadership of the League to adopt their view as its official policy on the US-Vietnam War, in which they succeeded.

More importantly, the League wanted to lead the movement in a new direction. However, having a strong position within the movement was not a simple task. As the thesis has disclosed, the League clashed with their affiliated mother party, the Labour Party because of their different views on the Vietnam issue during the early phase of the conflict. On the one hand, the League felt pressured and obligated to behave obedient according to the policies and political guidelines set by the Party. On the other hand, they wanted to be more closely involved with the anti-war activist movement. The League's desire to take a greater role in the movement angered the leadership, who condemned their participation. As this thesis has pointed out, there were three specific reasons as to why the Party decided to distance itself from the League and their participation in the movement in the early stage of the US-Vietnam War.

Firstly, the leadership of the Labour Party was not pleased with the strategies that the members of the League pursued through their participation in the movement – especially regarding use of public protests. The Party could not accept the new culture of the protest that was slowly rising in the beginning of the 1960s. After all, the protests were criticising the Norwegian government's policy on the Vietnam issue – policy that the Party created and advocated. The protest created a division and turmoil while they were the ruling power at the *Storting* at the time. The second reason was closely linked with the first one. Many of the anti-war activities were co-organised with other political youth organisations and anti-war movement organisations. That kind of collaboration undermined and weakened the image of

the Party. The Party had a long history of being independent. Therefore, it had to be substantial justifications for a representative or party-group, like the League, to seek collaboration with what they considered to be political rivals. The third and final reason is related to their ideological profile. The party was deeply loyal to the United States and the League's involvement in the movement could potentially damage the good standing and valued relationship. All three reasons constitute the explanations as to why the Party refused to give its support to the League, during the establishing phase of the movement. In other words, the established institution that was the Labour Party did not accept the affiliated youth's language of dissidence.

There are several elements of evidence that indicate and strengthen the belief that the Workers' Youth League was a vital driving force in the anti-war movement. Being the largest political youth organisation, the League had the opportunity to challenge the boundaries of institutional politics. Through its role in the movement, it changed the structure and dynamics of Norwegian domestic politics. In contrast to other actors in the movement, the League had a clear advantage. They had a unique position, which allowed them to succeed in becoming a key link between the movement and the established political institutions; in other words, between the protestors and arenas of political decision-making.<sup>182</sup> They appeared to be the only political youth organisation that was able to mediate between the extra-parliamentary opposition and typical, traditional political institutions and formal bodies.<sup>183</sup> In comparison to other political youth organisations, the League managed to reduce the internal political rivalries and conflicts that occurred within the anti-war movement. Arguably, their success in the movement was therefore mainly because they had close and strong connections to political institutions in Norway.

Throughout the active years of the anti-war movement, the Workers' Youth League through its majority representation in the Solidarity Committee and the Vietnam Movement in Norway organised several anti-war activities at both the national and the local level. Here, one can clearly see that the anti-war activities had one purpose, which was to voice their protests against the escalating role of the United States in Vietnam and to pressure the US to initiate peace negotiations that would put an end to the conflict. In other words, the youth sought social changes, which only could take place through a grassroots movement like the anti-war

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<sup>182</sup> Godbolt, "AUF og protesten mot Vietnamkrigen: Opprør og kontinuitet", p. 57.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

movement. With the help of the League, the anti-war movement managed to mobilise and engage hundreds of ordinary Norwegians in the Vietnam issue.

It was the Workers' Youth League who commenced the anti-war movement, however, it was the public display of Slettmark's Vietnam Picture that ignited the public debate on the Vietnam issue. It allowed the anti-war movement to present their alternative view on the US-Vietnam War as a humanitarian tragedy – a representation that gained a hegemonic position in the debate on the Vietnam issue. Furthermore, his provocative showcase of the art influenced the development of what can be defined and characterised as the Norwegian anti-war movement.<sup>184</sup>

Initially, the US-Vietnam War was of marginal significance in Norwegian domestic politics. However, during the course of the conflict, it became a source of political influence as it had a significant impact on the Norwegian population, especially the young. As this thesis has illustrated, the US-Vietnam War was an international issue that became something that the youth became deeply engaged with. The conflict became such a vital part of many of the youth; to the point that it formed their political identity and the way they viewed the world, especially in line with authority structures and values in the society. It was shaped by participation, activism and social structures within the anti-war movement. Consequently, the conflict had an impact on much of new generations of youth.

The anti-war movement created a public space where youth could learn about political socialisation with one another. Here, they were able to absorb knowledge about recruitment, negotiation strategies, organisation management and not at least, forming political and personal networks. In other words, the movement laid the foundation for the next generation of future leaders. These were fundamental foundations that the movement created as result of collective actions and response to the US-Vietnam War. The movement created an arena where youth were allowed to release their political expressions and emotions – a process that can be observed through the two solidarity organisations, the Solidarity Committee for Vietnam and the Vietnam Movement in Norway. After all, the youth constituted a large part of the anti-war movement. It was the youth who had time to commit to the cause of the movement. Additionally, their strong commitment made the youth become an indispensable

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<sup>184</sup> Godbolt, "Vietnam-protesten i Norge: Fra ad hoc Aksjoner til politisk kapital", p.61.

resource for the movement. Besides, they contributed their effort to the movement through donations, skills and knowledge. With that, the movement managed to connect to very different social and political groups from all corners of society.

The Norwegian anti-war movement was evidentially a success as a grassroots movement. Nonetheless, the movement did indeed experience highs and lows during its active years from 1965 to 1973. However, one of the factors that contributed to the success of the movement was the fact that the anti-war actions were provocative enough to catch the attention of the media. The attention helped the youth to sustain the movement because it became the recruiting grounds for new supporters and participants. Through published articles and editorials, it also promoted the demands and alternative viewpoints of the movement on the US-Vietnam War. Together, it changed the public opinion on the conflict.

The anti-war movement transformed into a solidarity movement in the midst of the conflict. They framed the US-Vietnam as a national liberation struggle and fully supported the liberation movement, the National Liberation Front. Therefore, the movement struggled to find an ideological balance between expressing solidarity to the NFL while preserving its humanitarian profile. It also struggled to find a balance between cooperation with established political institutions by forming alliances on the one hand and aggravation through proactive anti-war activism on the other. The youth stressed that the Vietnam issue had turned to something different and far more important than just peace in Vietnam. For them, standing in solidarity with the NFL, was part of a global struggle against the US as an imperialist power, which they had to curtail.

Finally, after years of intense political pressure, the Labour Party finally passed a policy that sided with the Workers' Youth League and matched the demands that the anti-war movement forwarded in 1967. The adaption of a policy that reflected their new standpoint was a crucial turning point in the debate on the Vietnam issue. Moreover, the policy legitimised and institutionalised the anti-war movement. It was also other external factors that forced the Party to change their mind on the matter, specifically the drastically change in public opinion. Nonetheless, adopting the policy also highlighted that the youth were now included in the decision-making processes at the *Storting*. The social settings had previously excluded youth from participating in the debates at the *Storting* because of their perceived lack of experience

and young age. Accordingly, the US-Vietnam War changed the very nature of Norwegian domestic politics.

The US-Vietnam War caused friction within almost every political party and was, to a certain extent, instrumental in creating the parliamentary instability that characterised the domestic politics at the time. It showed that the politicians were inconsistent with the demands of contemporary foreign policy based on debates of that time. It was not common to debate or publicly criticise foreign policies through the provocative tactics that the anti-war movement adapted. Before the events of the US-Vietnam War, the public opinion did not have that much presence or authority in the process of adopting policies.<sup>185</sup> In this way, the Vietnam issue also played a key role in the youth debate, where issues of authority and social values drew different generations against each other.<sup>186</sup> Moreover, the conflict allowed youth to approach topics that there had previously been very little public discussion on.

The issues and controversies that were linked with the US-Vietnam War were issues with moral and ethical connotations. The issues were high salience for the participants of the anti-war movement, because they were interpreted as important to their way of life in terms of how they and others wanted to live their lives. Therefore, the demands that the movement put forward were strongly related to the individual and personal dimension of autonomy and freedom. They greatly sympathised with Third World countries like Vietnam. The youth sought a fundamental change of social structure, in addition to radical politics that reflected their new perspective on ways of life. The radical anti-war activism orchestrated by the movement did certainly signify a historical period of collective actions. However, the significant time period of collective actions that prompted the creation of the New Social Movement scholarship – suggest that the theory does not quite align with the anti-war movement that occurred in Norway. It suggests that the national branch of the anti-war movement was distinctive compared to what the New Social Movement theory claims the post-industrial movements were. Nonetheless, as the theory implies, the Norwegian anti-war movement was not founded on material self-interests or problems of industrial capitalism and class justice. Instead, it was founded on the importance of identity, global consciousness and moral outrage. These elements resulted to be the driving force of the movement. These are

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<sup>185</sup> Godbolt, “AUF og protesten mot Vietnamkrigen: Opprør og kontinuitet”, p. 59.

<sup>186</sup> Godbolt, “Vietnam-protesten i Norge: Fra ad hoc aksjoner til politisk kapital”, p. 62.

also elements that made the movement new compared to what the labour movement had previously been during its “classic” phase.

On the other hand, because of the Workers’ Youth League prominent role and its complex ties with the Labour Party and with the wider part of the labour movement, the movement did not constitute a complete break off with the Labour movement. The New Social Movement theory on post-modern movements suggests a sharper discontinuity. As this master’s thesis implies, the relationship between the anti-war movement and the Labour Party was indeed complex and often challenging. However, there was still a relationship. The emergence of an anti-war movement in Norway that was founded of the Labour Left (both mainstream and more radical) ought to soften our perception of how clean and sharp the break was between the “old” and “new” social movements. This thesis suggests that the New Social Movement scholarship needs to be somewhat moderated in the case of the Norwegian anti-war movement. In other words, the Norwegian experience of the anti-war movement challenges the New Social Movement Theory, at least in one important respect.

To conclude, we can look back at the questions raised in the beginning of the thesis: How did the US-Vietnam War become such an important issue for the Norwegian youth? Why did a political youth organisation such as the Norwegian Workers’ Youth League become the dominant voice of the anti-war movement and what kind of impact did it have on the Norwegian domestic politics? During a short time period, the US-Vietnam War had become an important international issue for the Norwegian youth. The young identified themselves with, and had compassion towards, the suffering civilian population and the liberation movement, the NFL, of North Vietnam. The conflict highlighted the moral and ethical responsibility that one has as a human being, and that was what captivated the youth towards joining the anti-war movement. The youth was determined that through collective political pressure and public protests they would help put an end to US imperialism and, finally, liberate Vietnam from a foreign occupying power – as Norway once had experienced during the Second World War. Moreover, the League had a clear advantage as they had access to established political institutions. This unique position compelled the League to become the dominant voice of the anti-war movement. Their unique position was further strengthened because it had the opportunity to be a key mediator between the protesters and influential decision-makers. Finally, the anti-war movement forever changed and enhanced the Norwegian domestic politics. The protest against the US involvement in Vietnam had

unlocked areas of society that until then had been shielded from public debate and democratic participation. At the same time, the movement acted as a prototype for a new action-based and confrontational politics in Norway.

Therefore, the power of protest and the youth can be demonstrated through the success of the Workers' Youth League and the anti-war movement, and what they achieved on the Vietnam issue. The *Storting's* decision to diplomatically recognise North Vietnam in 1971 symbolised the last and greatest triumph of the movement before it naturally disintegrated in the mid-1970s. The historical development of the Norwegian anti-war movement strongly indicate that it was the young who first and foremost took the lead, and that the elders eventually followed in their footsteps.



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