

Daniel Ellsberg Speech at University of Roskilde, Denmark, on October 26, 2004.

Thank you very much.

I was just reminded that, actually, the last time I was in Denmark was for the studies for [...] nuclear weapons in '83. Ten years before that I was on my way home from your... eh, I can't remember why I was over here... but I stopped in Copenhagen for a few days of holiday, so I was on my way back and I came into the airport, they were showing on your television, that the discussion was beginning – the debate was beginning – in this, eh, house of representatives, on the articles on impeachment for Nixon. So I looked up the next available flight, and I turned right around, got my luggage, and went back to the states so I could watch the vote on the impeachment for Nixon. And, eh, actually, he resigned on August 8<sup>th</sup> – he left office on August 9<sup>th</sup>, but he announced his resignation on August 8<sup>th</sup> – which was my fourth wedding anniversary, so we had quite a [...]. In fact, we went out for an anniversary dinner, and eh, we found that our dinner had been paid for by some anonymous person in the restaurant.

So, eh, the constitution triumphed in the [...] .triumphed!

I was asked last night - I think I'll repeat it today a little – to tell, how I came to put out these secrets in 1969 and more widely in 1971. And, really it started with my first day in pentagon, as a fulltime employee – which was August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1964. In my coincidence that was the day the US was claiming that we had been attacked – a destroyer had been attacked, for the second time – in the golf of Tonga, and the [...] trying to see into which way of responding by 64 sorties – that is individual plane fights – over North Vietnam, the first attacks of N. Vietnam, and I stayed at the pentagon that night, all night, monitoring those fights to see what happened, and report to the secretary, but as of that night – my first day in pentagon, I've been there for years before as a consultant of the RAND corporation, but this was my first day as a fulltime employee. As of that night, I knew that every statement being made by the president, and the secretary of defense, to the American public, about that incidence, was false! The president was saying there was unequivocal evidence of an unprovoked attack on our destroyers on routine patrol, in the international waters of N. Vietnam. And that in responding to this, we sought no wider war. And I won't go into the details, they're in my book, actually 'secrets', it's the first chapter – it's the beginning of the book. I know that each of those statements were false, there was no unequivocal evidence, the evidence was extremely equivocal, that there had been an attack, and in fact was wrong. If I can leap forward here for a moment, there was an exact counterpart to, say, Secretary Powell's statements to the UN, and those of Rumsfeld, Bush and others, on the ev... - For that matter, here in Denmark – ... on the evidence of WOMDs – Weapons of Mass Destruction – in Iraq. It may be, that all of those officials believed there were WOMDs in Iraq, just as Johnson and McNamara did believe that night that there had been an attack, but it stated that the evidence was unequivocal – was definitely sure. They were lying! Both your prime minister, foreign minister and defense minister, Powell in the UN saying: "these are not beliefs these are facts!"; Rumsfeld saying: "We not only know... We're (sure, red.) that there are nuclear weapons – oh, I should say WOMDs rather – in - chemical and biological weapons – in Iraq; "We know where they are, they are here, here, here!" All those statements were false, and they knew they were false! They knew that the evidence was extremely thin, and equivocal, and in both cases, the evidence they believed, was wrong. There were no WOMDs, there had been no attack. So a very strong correspondence in that case!

Eh, the question of provocation, the question of where the ships were, all these other things were also false, and above all the notion that we sought no wider war was false! As false, let's say, as, eh, president Bush's indications to the public, that he had not yet made the decision as of August 2001,

or September, or October, or November, or December 2001, or January 2002 – Blair saying the same - all that was false. The war was on, and the UN was not going to stop them! Eh, etc.

What to do in such a situation? Well, I'd say, they knew already, and one day in the pentagon, that the president was lying us into a war. Whether that war was right or wrong, he was lying us into war. Acting unconstitutionally, because our constitution gives congress alone the responsibility for deciding to go to war unless our troops are under attack, and on august 4<sup>th</sup> of cause, he claimed falsely that they had been under attack. But, eh, the plans for getting into a big war, eh, were obviously not – we were not expecting the N. Vietnamese to attack the united states and our forces – and those plans were made well before the election. What should I have done?

Well, what I did do, was what all of my colleagues did do. We kept our mouths shut, to congress and to the press. None of us broke rank on that, for McNamara [...], to tell the press they were being lied to... and the congress. And, eh, we did our jobs. Some people believed in the bombings, we were about to start, and did start. I and my immediate boss, the assistant secretary of defense, did not believe in it. But his boss, that is to say my boss on the move - secretary of defense McNamara – did want to see they'd started, so we did what he wanted. I don't think it occurred to us either to expose the lies, or to defy, the president... or McNamara!<sup>1</sup> Just as most of Frank's (Frank Sørholm Grevil, red.) colleagues, did go on with the lies. That they knew as well as he knew, eh, here in Denmark. That is the normal, ordinary, bureaucratic rule - the way of doing it.

That was '64. Well I gave documents, 7000 pages actually, to the senate in 1969, five years later. They did nothing, they did not reveal it, because they were afraid of retaliation from the president. Bureaucratically, in various ways, and being called names, if they did put it out. A year and a half went by, two more invasions, Cambodia 1970, Laos in 1971, and finally I gave these documents directly to the press. And when the press... when the New York Times was enjoined... was ordered not to publish - for the first time in our history that had ever happened - I gave them to the Washington Post. And when they were enjoined, I gave them to the Washington Parole[or Pro???]. For 13 days my wife and I were underground – might say, in Cambridge, going from room to room, place to place – eluding the FBI, rather easily it turned out. [audience laughing] as we've seen lately... the FBI's not perfect, should we say... and, eh, in this case it served the interest of our country, because the information did get out. And although the supreme court finally ruled that the public did have the right to see this information, I was indicted for twelve-something, comes to approximately 115 years sentence. Coming up to the: 'What had led to my change in behavior during that time?' Well, two things – a number of things really – those 64 sorties of August 4<sup>th</sup> 1964 had been followed by millions and millions of tons of bombs. Before the war was over, the United States had dropped four times the tonnage of all of world war two on Indochina. 2 millions tons in world war two, 7.2 million tons in Indochina. That was not all done by '71, when I gave this to the press, or '69, but there was still actually a couple of million tons to go. Putting out the pentagon papers did not stop the war immediately. In fact the next year was one of the heaviest years of the bombing, and it did appear as if nothing had been accomplished by telling the truth in this respect. But the public's opinion on the war, by reading the history of it, had changed. But not changed from support to opposition - they were already opposed to the war, because of tens of thousands of American deaths, and the clear prospect of staying were we did indefinitely – so the public were already against the war, and after the pentagon papers they were more against the war. So, that, however, didn't make any difference, the president wasn't paying attention to public opinion, he was doing what he thought was right! Run the war, seeking victory, hopeless as that was. What did

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<sup>1</sup> In a tone indicating he is correcting himself.

make a difference, as it turned out, was that he was afraid that I would put out information on his own administration, that I hadn't yet – that was not in the pentagon papers. Which I did in 1968, before he took office. He was afraid that I had documents on him, which I did. He was afraid that I had documents that would prove that he was expanding the war, I didn't have those, but it was reasonable for him to fear that I did. And to keep me from putting those out, he took various criminal measures to shut me up. He tried to get information to blackmail me into silence, to threaten me with revealing. Which is, by the way, absolutely standard for whistleblowers, as Frank has experienced also? When somebody puts out information that the boss doesn't want out, the very first thing the boss will look for is scandals in your background, things that you're embarrassed about. Indications that you are, in quote [...] employee, and should be ignored. That's why it's so important really to put out documents, because it doesn't really matter whether you're a good guy or a bad guy, the documents speak for themselves. They don't rely on your authority or your credibility.

I was... by the way, I think in the introduction you<sup>2</sup> mentioned that what I had done was treason... I was not charged with treason. Our constitution has a very narrow definition of treason, and there's a reason for that. The only crime that is actually defined in the constitution, so it can't be broad without the constitutional amendment 8 'comfort to the enemy, essentially in the times of war'. And in giving information to the American public – giving true information – is not treason. So they say that it has a narrow definition, and I wasn't charged with that. The reason for such a narrow definition is that in the eyes of George III our country was founded by traitors. Everyone of the founders of our constitution, and declaration of independence, was a loyal subject of George III in 1774, and a traitor in 1775-76. Ready for hanging, if they caught him. Having discovered a different loyalty, to their own country, to the independence, to, ultimately, to a constitution and a bill of right. Eh, they did not allow them to observe the highest disobedience to the authority of King-Emperor George III. I was, however, called a traitor by lot's of people, and unpatriotic, and –I don't know- 'not supporting troops in wartime', and all these things. Called a lot of names, and that is inevitable if you, as I say, tell truths that your bosses don't want told. And other measures are likely, even if you're not charged with a crime, the likelihood is very high that you'll lose – if it's classified information – the clearance, access, to influence, the chance to influence your government for the better from inside, the access to information, your job, your career, if, like me, it had been entirely in the classified world. All my colleagues had clearances, all of them. That meant I lost all my friends essentially forever, because they could not afford to associate with me in any way socially or indicate any kind of sympathy for me, lest they lose their clearance and their jobs and their careers. And I was very fortunate in one respect, many people in these positions lose their merit. With the loss of a job, the pressure of a trial, the espouse –man or woman- feels 'I didn't sign up for this', children's education is imperiled, and marriages rarely survives this actually. I was very lucky on this, the woman who helped me put out the pentagon papers the first year of our marriage is still my wife 34 years later, so I'm very fortunate here, but that I can say is not the ordinary thing. So the costs of doing this are likely to be very serious if you're found out. In my case it was impor... it was inevitable, that I would be found out because of seven thousand pages, there weren't that many people that had access, and the others were not suspected of being... having the capability of doing that – which I took as a compliment! [Audience laughing] A lot of people suspected it was me, at that point. So, uh, the similarity to now is very striking, as I say – or I didn't say perhaps – by '69 the other factor was that I knew something that most Americans didn't know. That the war was not ending in '69, under Nixon, it was going to continue. I knew that because I worked for Nixon in the

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<sup>2</sup> Addressing Claus Bryld, who made the introduction.

beginning of his administration as a consultant, and I knew people were still in the white house. And I learned from them, that the war was going to get large, as it did. And I wanted to avoid that. I didn't have the documents Nixon feared that I had, to prove what I'd been told, prove that he was making threats of escalation – that was shortly carried out, and it resulted in a wider war. All I had was history, so I put out history in hope that people would realize that what had happened under four separate presidents of lies and secret threats and escalations, was happening under the fifth president – Nixon! Actual... that was my hope. Actually, that wasn't realized very much, very few people were convinced, that just because four earlier presidents had lied, they should be suspicious that this president was still lying the same way. He were very reluctant to believe that the current officials, even if they didn't vote for him, are strict lying to them, [...]. Frank was telling me that people in his intelligence service were saying: "if secretary of state Powell is saying these things – and not only saying them, but saying he knows them, they are true, they are flat – they must be true, he wouldn't be sticking his neck out, he wouldn't lye that blatantly." That's what they call, in Denmark, an intelligence service! [Audience laughing] Well, they're naïve, they're tenuous. They had not, apparently, have a very long experience in their own government, I'll... I would have to infer, or any government. All government officials lye! As a great journalist in America used to say, I. F. Stone: "All government officials lye, even your own government, and nothing they say is to be believed!" And that doesn't mean that everything they say is a lye, It does mean that anything they say could be a lye, and is not to be taken as the last word, the evidence, the proof of what the situation actually is. I was reminded that just last week, in a trial, I was just telling, by Mary Kelly - I can't think of this without laughing all over – eh, Mary Kelly, who disarmed an American navy war playing in Shannon airfield, where she pointed out under the Irish constitution: "It had no business being, since the dáil – their parliament – had not voted to participate in this war, with... in the absence of a UN declaration. They hadn't voted at all, there should not then had been US airplanes on their way to Iraq on an Irish airfield – which where neutral. [...] and... so, she took efforts to disarm them, with an axe. [Audience Laughing] nobody in them!. But, the, eh, Prosecutor actually said – this just comes back to me, I was sitting in the courtroom hoping to be a witness... not much chance of that, it turned out – eh, the American pilot, naval commander had been on the stand saying – under oath – that he'd flown ten thousand miles... flying ten thousands of miles with nothing aboard other than, eh, spare parts and fuel for his own plane. And there was another Irish officer of logistics, who wanted to testify under oath, he was a logistics expert, he said: "The chance that this plane would be sent ten thousand miles with nothing aboard, but its own spare parts is zero, there's no chance of that!" But the judge would not allow that to go to the jury, eh, it had no meriting. So, what was on the plane, she was claiming was part of the war. So, eh, the, eh, the problem was that they, the guy swore it. Nothing more, nothing, no personnel, no nothing. They had, however, no manifest - they had not been able to get one, he couldn't really remember, it hadn't had a manifest, whatever - there was no documentary evidence of what he said, but, anyways, the prosecutor kept hammering Mary Kelly: "How can you say, that you believed, that this was a military plane bond for Iraq? You heard this commander testify, under oath, that there were no military material on that!" And she said: "Well, I don't believe that!" [Laughs] And the prosecutor said: "But, you heard the testimony." How could he possibly be raising the question about it? And I was sitting there, not knowing how to believe my ears, who is this guy? A child? He really believes that military officials tell the truth? Eh, under such circumstances? It's almost tragically! As I say: "the DDIS is able to, eh, make differences on such eh... surely Powell would be lying that much. Well, he was lying that much, as a matter of fact." [raising his finger] He may have believed there were WOMDs, but when he was saying that the evidence for that was unequivocal and conclusive... He is not that stupid, as to believe that, eh, and so, he knew that he was lying about it. The evidence just as, what Frank was posing, I'll tell you, knew that government

officials were concealing all of the uncertainties that his own intelligence service had expressed to the government. And why were they doing that? Just to make it shorter? To make it a little more concise? NO, because to justify going to war against a country that had not attacked us, you, US or anybody - there's really no legal justification – but if you're trying to make some kind of excuse, you have to say that your evidence for it is unequivocal, clear and so forth, to go to war, to kill people. Beyond reasonable doubt, sentence to death. They were sentencing to death Iraqi civilians, babies, and soldiers, who had not attacked anybody, and was not in the process of attacking anybody. Murder! Illegitimate homicide, murder! You could call it war, but in this case the war was mass murder. That isn't always the case. When German planes were coming over Britain, and this has always kept me from being a pacifist, by the way, this example, when I was ten years old, and German plane bombers were coming over London, to bomb the city of London, and British spit fighter pilots and anti aircraft guns were firing at them. I have never been able to convince myself that that was wrong or illegitimate or murder, for the British to do that. And so, I have never been a pacifist, and when I was in the marines, I was not a pacifist, but I'm not a pacifist now. But what the German bombers where doing was murder, it wasn't just war. It was not their right to being free of being fired at. And if they were killed, they had not been murdered. And when American, or Danish, soldiers are killed in the occupation of Iraq, I cannot tell myself that that is murder. It may or may not have been proved, it may or may not lead to good results. Let me make one more distinction here, in my opinion – strong opinion, not just a whim – to kill civilians, unarmed combatants, non-combatants is murder, deliberately. Under any circumstances, whichever side you're on. I do not recognize terrorism – the death of... the deliberate destruction of non-combatants, of unarmed humans – as justified in an independence struggle, or self-defence. I don't regard shooting the hostages of a burglars family, or even a murderers family as justified. I don't regard terrorism by my own country, which is engaged in an enormous scale as justified. I talked about German bombers, as being guilty of clear-cut crimes of war. And US and British bombers, who create firestorms over Dresden, and trying to do so over Berlin – did create a firestorm over Hamburg – even with out the firestorm, these fire bombings, the firebombing of Tokyo is perhaps the greatest act of mass murder in human history, larger than the atom bombs. More people killed in one night, march 9 -10<sup>th</sup> 1945, by firebombs in Tokyo, than the immediate deaths in both Nagasaki and Hiroshima combined. How many people here knew what I just said about March 9 – 10<sup>th</sup>? How many did not? [there is more sound of movements after the second question!] Well, when we talk about history in comparison the context we stand [...], the fact is we live in a world in which British and the US, the two major allies in Iraq as it happens, eh, figure as the most successfully to legitimize mass murder in wartime, the deliberate killing of non-combatants. Up till that time regarded as a clear-cut crime of war. But since they did it, and did not prosecute it at Nuremburg, it has, to some degree, entered into the common law of nations. A defendant could now come out and say: “Well, this is no longer a crime of war, the British did it, the Americans did it. Of course, the Japanese and the Germans did it first. Take those British bombers who went over Berlin, eh, London. Coventry, [...] up Coventry. I don't know if you are aware, no Germans were charged for that, at Nuremburg. Battle of Britain! How many people here knew that? There's none, who knew that! They were not charged, and the fact that they were not charged, in effect, established the point: “We no longer regard that as a Crime of War, we no longer regard that as terrorism.” Although the British called it terror bombing, throughout the war, terror bombing! That's what it was! Well, they did it. Why didn't we charge it? Because, we'd done it also. So we fairly didn't charge anything, that we had also done. And that had the effect of making people think that it was legal. I'm coming up to the point that I think there are certain rules here, of humanity, that should be regarded as applying to all sides, both to –as I say- to, eh, Tolstoy, was more of a pacifist than I was, once said: “The difference between revolutionary violence, and revolutionary... and non-revolutionary

violence, is the difference between dog shit and cat shit!" And I wouldn't, as I said, [...] entirely to all violence, I see a place for violence in self-defense. But Actually, I used Tolstoy's rule for terrorism, so I don't excuse Osama Bin-Ladens terrorism, whatever his purpose is. Or, our counterterrorism. And the destruction of Fallujah, which is under way now - And which will probably go into much higher gear days after the election - is involved in massive indiscriminate bombing of Fallujah, which will be called 'discriminate bombing', but on a massive which is certain to kill many many civilians and will inflame, eh, even the shian..[?] of Iraqis in such a way, as to confront the US, and Denmark, with either the choice of extricating their forces on helicopters very quickly, less they be destroyed. Or, eh, sending many many more troops. So Denmark again, I think, will be called on to send more troops, and will face a decision whether to remain a part of a clear-cut crime against the peace, which is were Denmark is right now - along with the US, and Britain, and 28 other nations or so. Or to wake up to the fact, that this is... that you and I have no rights what ever to be killing any Iraqis in Iraq, and stop doing so. And have no right to ask our young men and women to be targets in Iraq, or to send them over there to kill or be killed, and to withdraw them. I'm not confident that even president Kerry, who I hope will be our next president, will quickly get us out of Iraq, as in Vietnam, there will be strong pressures to say: "Don't be the president to lose a war, to be defeated, to admit a terrible error." He hasn't yet quite admitted it. That the act of war, he voted for, was a terrible error. His vote was a terrible error, He hasn't been much more anxious to say that than Bush is to say that he made a mistake. Kerry did make the mistake, and he hasn't admitted that! And that might keep him in [??], rather than being called irresolute and flip-flopper and coward and weak on terrorism. That's a terrible judgment, but even so I'm working very hard for him, because I believe that Bush's next term will be even more terrible. Much more than Kerry's! Not necessarily in Iraq, but in the supreme court, in a turn towards fascism in the case of the next terrorist attack on our country. I think under Bush, what is to be expected, is a change in government - not unlike the change that took place in Denmark in 1940, with that new administration. Basically, fascist government. And, eh, the Administration... And, I don't expect that under Kerry, which is a pretty big difference. And for the world to have this superpower, not only being out of control as it is now, out of anybody else's control, but under a president and a [...] who have no believe in the bill of rights, and will not observe domestic laws anymore than they already deserve - eh, observe, international law. That would be a very bad turn for the world, even worse than now. So, as some of your signs here on campus already indicate - Yes, everyone should have a vote. Of cause, as an American, I would like to say: "Let's start by letting every voter have a vote, in America!" [Audience laughing] You can't count on that at all. That the residue voters and the people really qualified to vote will be allowed to vote in America. They wiped of their [...] the vote's not counted... It's a real danger. Yes, of cause you should all be represented, as those American traitors in 76 said: "No taxation, without representation!" No draft, without representation! No participation in aggressive wars and empires, without representation! Good principles, but you don't have it here. However, you can vote in various other ways, other than a particular vote, and I say: "The withdrawal of willing participation in aggressive war, may not - will not - stop that war already waging. Will not clear your consciences totally, but would be a step in the direction. And a possibility of trying to wake up American public, that for one thing believes that their policies - that is the president's policies - are currently supported by most people in the world. This is an immense delusion, but it is shared by at least half the American public. And the news that one after another of their colleagues in this coalition have turned away from them, will at first be discounted as cowardice or weakness or irresolution or something else, but it can attract the attention of some people, and maybe they have been misled into believing that this war has support. If it doesn't have your support, you should be taking steps, in my opinion, to let the American people know forcefully that it doesn't have your support.

Finally, I realized just yesterday, that an image that has been much in my mind ‘the emperor’s new clothes’ originated in this country. The Hans Christian Andersen story, except that I’ve always seen a difference in that in America, in the last two years. What we are denying to ourselves, in America, is not that our leader has no clothes, that’s obvious [audience laughing] –he’s naked of intellectual pretensions, so to say – What we do not allow ourselves to recognize, like the crowd in Copenhagen, is that he’s an emperor! That he thinks of himself as an emperor, he act’s like an emperor. And if we let that happen without challenge, he is an emperor! I noticed your sign out there, in Danish, but it was translatory [?]: “Kerry – Bush. Are they president of the world?” Well, obviously not! Are they emperor of the world? Bush, thinks so! Kerry could well be let to imitate it! Do you want an emperor? I think that the lesson of this war, what you should bring this up to, is the continuing validity of certain principles that it took a long time for this species and this world to come to. The UN charter is not outvoted! The ideal that it is not valid to go to war, for Denmark, NATO, US or anybody, unless under direct attack, unless the bombers are overhead, unless the UN security council – leaving it as it is, miserable as it is. It’s not some perfect institution, certainly not! But should we substitute for the UN security council the judgment of any one ruler? Like the US president? I would say, we have learned no – the dangers of that! The dangers of that! Go back to the UN charter idea. Our constitution says, eh, don’t go to war without the vote of congress, and that can’t be delegated to the president. We in America should have... - we learned that. In Ireland, that’s what Mary Kelly is trying to do with her trial, the constitution forbids that, they ignored it. The prosecutor actually said in the trial – somebody mentioned the constitution: “The constitution is not the highest law of the land.” And everybody thought “what did that...” No one actually challenged it. One of those imperial moments, sort of... Did he mean that? And I asked somebody: “What could he have in mind?” They said: “He lost his marbles, as we say! [Audience laughing] He’s flipped, something slipped calling in his brain or something!” He actually said it twice though, the idea is that the constitution had it right! Not just ‘even in the nuclear age’, ‘especially in the nuclear age’, and the idea that your highest loyalty is not to a given imperial ruler, is not to the president, but to the constitution, to the UN charter, to international law, and to fellow humans. What should have warned those people, ordered, to torture the people in the Iraqi Prison? What was their loyalty? Their loyalty... one could appeal, they could have considered, I don’t say the highest, but something to be considered, was your loyalty to other human beings. This is not what a human being should do to another human being. You owe them that respect, that is the obligation, that is the family hood, that’s the community that you should consider in terms of obligations, along with whatever your obligations are to your agency, your team unit, your electorate man, your president, even your own country. In other words: “Come to realize, your president can be wrong! The allied can be wrong! NATO can be wrong!” That doesn’t tell you what to do, but it tells you that obedience to orders, even keeping a promise, keeping a secret, may not be your highest obligation, and that you have a choice! And you take responsibility for that choice, and, eh, can act on it! So, Frank Grevil here is definitely one of my heroes today, as is Catherine Garney [???], Mary Kelly, and, eh... I should say, by the way, that if Mary Kelly endangered other human life, by what she did, she could not have been my hero, perhaps you understand! But she did... I would not condone it... But in terms of her attack on that piece of property, a military plane on its way to Iraq, I definitely do support what she did. And the willingness of them to pay a personal price, in order to withdraw your cooperation from such wrongdoing, is very much to be applauded, but more than that, I think, to be drawn from, to be inspiring, and to emulate. So, I’m happy to be here in your country, thank you! [Audience clapping]