

The New York Times Magazine

November 21, 1965

SECTION 4

Diarist

It had not been Schlesinger's original intention to write a history of the Kennedy Administration. He had long kept a journal in which he entered accounts of his occasional meetings with prominent people which might be of historical interest. But President Kennedy, at the start of his Administration, said he did not want his staff recording the daily discussions of the White House, because he knew that remarks tossed off lightly or irritably in conversation often looked quite different in print. After the Bay of Pigs episode, however, he said to Schlesinger: "I hope you kept a full account of that."

Schlesinger replied that he had not, because he had understood that the President did not want his staff to keep detailed diaries.

"No, go ahead," Ken-

nedy said. "You can be damn sure that the C.I.A. has its record and the Joint Chiefs [of Staff] theirs. We'd better make sure we have a record over here. So you go ahead."

"A Thousand Days" rests upon the careful notes that Schlesinger kept from that time forward. He had anticipated making those notes available to Kennedy who, at the end of his Presidency, intended to write a book about his years in the White House.

In doing his book, Schlesinger supplemented the journal by talking to most of the top figures of the Kennedy Administration, since there were some important events in which he had not been a participant and others in which his notes of the time were not complete.

—W. V. S.