# Schlesinger Calls Viet War JFK Failure

NEW YORK, Nov. 25 (UPI) The late President John F. Kennedy was aware, shortly before his death, that the war in Vietnam "was his great failure in foreign policy," says former White House adviser Arthur Schlesinger Jr.

Schlesinger, in the final chapter of his book on the Kennedy Administration, "A Thousand Days," writes that the overthrow of the Roman Catholic Diem regime in Saigon three weeks before Kennedy's own assassination Nov. 22, 1963, left the President "somber and shaken." The book has gone on sale in bookstores after being serialized in Life magazine.

Schlesinger went on to say: "I had not seen him so depressed since the Bay of Pigs. No doubt he realized that Vietnam was his great failure in foreign policy, and that he had never really given it his full attention."

Schlesinger writes that President Kennedy increased U.S. support in Vietnam because "the fact that the Vietnamese seemed ready to fight had made him feel that there was a reasonable chance of making a go of it. . . .

"Yet with his memory of the French in Indochina in 1951, he had always believed that there was a point at which our intervention might turn Vitnamese nationalism against us and transform the Asian civil conflict into a white man's war."

The publication of Schlesinger's entire book recalls a controversy touched off last

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summer then, in one of the Life magazine installments, Schlesinger wrote that Kennedy had decided to ask for the resignation of Secretary of State Dean Rusk following the 1964 election.

Rusk is roundly criticized in the book for his handling of several foreign policy matters, including Vietnam.

Writing of a vital U.S. mission to Vietnam in 1961 by Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor and Walt W. Rostow of the White House staff, Schlesinger says:

"The very composition of the mission—headed by a general with a White House aide as deputy and no figure of comparable rank from the State Department—was significant. It expressed a conscious decision by the Secretary of State to turn the Vietnam problem over to the Secretary of Defense (Robert McNamara).

"Rusk doubtless decided to do this because the military aspects seemed to him the most urgent, and Kennedy doubtless acquiesced because he had more confidence in McNamara and Taylor than in State.

"The effect, however, was to color future thinking about Vietnam in both Saigon and Washington with the unavowed assumption that Vietnam was primarily a military rather than a political problem."

Schlesinger frequently contrasts the role played by McNamara in Mr. Kennedy's cabinet with the "indifference" of Rusk.

"McNama probably did more than anyone else to sustain the disarmament drive," Schlesinger writes. "With his sense of the horror of nuclear conflict, his understanding of the adequacy of existing stockpiles, his fear of nuclear proliferation, his analytic command of the weapons problem and his managerial instinct to do something about an irrational situation, he forever sought new ways of controlling the arms race."

Schlesinger contends that of the civilians most closely associated with the disarmament problem, "the Secretary of State proved the main source of indifference."

Part of the reason for this, the historiain maintains, was "because of his (Rusk's) chronically cautions cast of mind. Presiding over the committee of principals on disarmament, he often gave the impression that he regarded disarmament as an essay in futility, if not folly."