

• New Book On Johnson

60 Years On The Firing Line

WASHINGTON (AP) — A new book by veteran Washington newsman Arthur Krock describes Lyndon B. Johnson's presidency as "far short of acceptability" and says he "is presiding over a society sickened by quack cure-alls."

"I have contracted a visceral fear," Krock writes. "It is that the tenure of the United States as the first power in the world may be one of the briefest in history."

The book, "Memoirs. Sixty years on the Firing Line," will be in stores Monday. The title refers to Krock's 60 years as a newspaperman.

Krock, head of the New York Times bureau in Washington from 1932 to 1953—and a columnist for the Times until two years ago—writes from the perspective of a man who has known eleven Presidents, beginning with Theodore Roosevelt.

Krock blames John F. Kennedy and Johnson for U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war, even though it was Dwight D. Eisenhower who first provided military assistance for the South Vietnamese government.

Eisenhower, writes Krock, set sharp limits on U.S. participation in the conflict.

"It was the reversal of this

limited application, first by President Kennedy, and then by President Johnson, that plunged the United States into the disastrous ground war in Southeast Asia in an area outside a sound perimeter of national security," Krock says.

He speaks of "the practical politics reflected by Johnson's 1964 pledges against greater military involvement in Southeast Asia, though he was fully aware from reports to a Cabinet meeting in November 1963 that he prospect was precisely to the contrary." These practical politics, Krock says, "will not only be at the disposal of his Democratic heir in the campaign of 1968 but will certainly be as unconscionably employed."

In assessing Johnson's domestic record, Krock contends the President's monetary and fiscal policies are "documented as a confused, incompetent and gigantic failure that threatens the security of savings, the purchasing power of pensions—all the hard-won material rewards of industrious personal achievement."

The Supreme Court, Krock writes, "has made the largest and most essential contributions", toward transforming the American system of government into "a mass democracy and neosocialist welfare state."

Comparing the administrations of presidents he has known, Krock concludes that Eisenhower's was one of the most notable.

"Politicians in Congress—and other ardent champions of the Supreme Court decision that forbade compulsory racial segregation in the public schools—were already engaged in irresponsible, vote-seeking, riot-breeding assurances to the Negro minority that a fully amalgamated American society was on the verge of attainment," he says of the Eisenhower period.

"But only when these assur-

ances were fully demonstrated to be cruel hoaxes of the Negro population—in 1966-67—did the surge of violent Negro civil disobedience appear . . . The Justice Department under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson has spinelessly established the fact of being a Negro as a grant of immunity for most notorious flagrant violators of both the civil and criminal laws."

Krock makes these observations about some of the presidents he has known:

Calvin Coolidge—"really very friendly and rather garrulous"; Herbert Hoover—"superb mental equipment, a wit dry in the sense that the finest champagne is dry . . . (he) might, if re-elected, have succeeded earlier and better than his successor did"; Franklin D. Roosevelt—"a sincere devotion to the social uplift of the underprivileged and fairer economic distribution . . . lack of depth . . . conceit and arrogance"; Harry S. Truman—"complete courage in making momentous decisions and an iron backbone that kept him from ever going back on such a decision once made . . . a strong president";

Eisenhower—"a conservative, but a progressive conservative; a candid, honest spokesman of the interest of the people of the nation and the free world . . . not as sensitive at all times to social needs and economic malproportions as presidential leadership in this age requires";

Kennedy—"the profit Kennedy gained from his mistakes was larger than their debit, the world tensions—including the U.S. involvement in Vietnam—for which Kennedy has the initial responsibility . . . would be in more manageable form today if Kennedy were president."

Of his newspaper, the New York Times, Krock writes of "certain disquieting changes," and adds: "Among these are over-organization; the second-guessing treatment applied to

highly qualified reporters by a growing horde of editors in the New York office; . . . and the self-satisfaction of successful management that is fostered, more than by anything else, by the excess of power that attends the lack of competition."