

Schlesinger Rejects 'Munich' As Policy Model

By Ernest A. Lotito
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Historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. warned yesterday against drawing analogies between present American foreign policy and the British and French attempts to appease Hitler at Munich in 1938.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning author pointed out that Winston Churchill had rejected the Munich argument as a reason for British entry into Indo China in 1954. He added that the area is now no more a model of Munich than it was in 1954.

Author of "A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House," Schlesinger spoke at The Washington Post Book and Author Luncheon.

His subject was the relationship between history and public policy and he argued that history does not help us foretell the future, rather that it "helps us understand the extreme difficulty, even the arrogance" of trying to predict.

'Favorite Analogy'

Munich, Schlesinger said, is the "favorite analogy" of those who feel history should be the basis for making present policy decisions. "With great wisdom," he commented, former President Eisenhower rejected the "Munich interpretation" when Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal in 1956.

The recent purge of Communists in Indonesia, Schlesinger said, was also vindication for those Government officials who urged that the United States not give up in that country. Who could have predicted what would happen in Indonesia, Schlesinger asked.

Schlesinger pointed to the split in Soviet-Chinese relations as an example of the unpredictable and as an example of what can happen in time.

To those who see a confrontation with Communist China as inevitable and advocate fighting her now while she can not match the U.S. nuclear arsenal, Schlesinger said that no one could predict China's future behavior.

"When we base present

policy . . . on a guess about the behavior of a country a decade from now," he said in sum, "we are flying in the face of the lessons of history."

Mrs. Tuchman Speaks

Schlesinger followed another historian and Pulitzer Prize winner, Barbara Tuchman, to the microphone. Mrs. Tuchman, who won the Pulitzer for "The Guns of August" and who recently published "The Proud Tower," spoke about the historian as a creative writer.

Writers of good non-fiction, she maintained, must be as creative as poets and novelists. She then objected to calling historians writers of non-fiction, and added that she preferred "writers of reality."

She settled on the word "realists," admitting it was an unfortunate selection, and then added that they were as deserving of the title "artist" as poets, novelists or painters.

"The quality of perceiving truth and conveying it," Mrs. Tuchman commented, "is what distinguishes artists."

"I always have thought like an artist when I worked on a book," she said, explaining that by "thinking like an artist" she "meant perceiving an historical truth by seizing on a suggestion and then conveying it to the reader."

'Write a Good Sentence'

She added that "nothing is more satisfying than to write a good sentence . . ." Good writing, she said, must be "simple prose full of surprises" — and that, she concluded "does not just happen."

The laughs of the luncheon were provided by Bel Kaufman, author of "Up the Down Staircase," a humorous account about students and teachers.

Miss Kaufman, a teacher by profession, told, among other things, of having rejected as a title for her book: "Don't Shoot Until You See the Pupils," and of this compliment she received from a pupil:

"You're the only teacher who ever learned me English real good."