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From Trust to Tragedy: The Political Memoirs of Frederick Nolting, Kennedy's Ambassador to Diem's Vietnam

Lindsay Nolting

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When he was appointed ambassador to South Vietnam by President Kennedy, Frederick Nolting remembers a friend warning him that Vietnam puts a blight on everyone who touches it--a blight of frustration, futility, and failure. Twenty-seven years later, he observes candidly that ironies, frustrations, reversals, and failures abound in the records of many Americans who have touched Vietnam, including his own. *From Trust to Tragedy* is Frederick Nolting's frank and perceptive account of the events in Vietnam and Washington that culminated in the overthrow of the Diem government in November 1963. It is the story of how the situation appeared to him as he worked to help Vietnam achieve peace and freedom and why he still believes that by encouraging the military revolt against Diem, the Kennedy administration set the stage for the tragic war that followed. Although Nolting's account is, by his own description, not a history but an interpretation, he has checked his vivid recollections against official documents and the interpretations of others so that they blend with the broader fabric of the history of the Vietnam War. He pulls no punches in his evaluations of some of the towering figures of the Kennedy administration against whom he had to fight for his policies. As William E. Colby, the CIA station chief in Saigon notes in his foreword, In the end, he lost that battle, but his story of it is a necessary piece of American history.

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