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\$250,000 U.S.I.A. Film on Vietnam, 3 Years in Making, Being Shelved

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WASHINGTON, June 9 — After three years of work and an outlay of nearly \$250,000, the United States Information Agency is letting a major propaganda film on the Vietnam war slip into oblivion.

Agency officials said today that no formal decision had been made to shelve the hour-long film — "Vietnam, Vietnam!" — But authoritative sources in the agency indicated that it would "definitely" not be offered for television or theater showings to foreign audiences.

"It's a dead duck and it will stay in the can," a source in the agency said in response to inquiries whether the film, directed by John Ford and now virtually completed, would ever be released.

It was reliably reported that the head of the agency, Frank J. Shakespeare Jr., had concluded that the changing military and political situation in Vietnam, as well as domestic political considerations, now raised doubts on the film's value as convincing and productive propaganda.

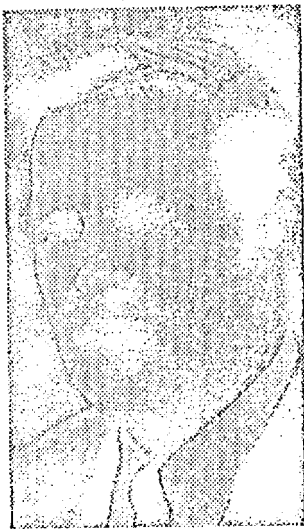
Will 'Fade Away'

In the absence of a decision by Mr. Shakespeare that the film should be distributed, the sources said, "Vietnam, Vietnam!" will simply be allowed to "fade away."

Only a few months ago, the agency's motion picture and television division sent out circulars to posts abroad saying that the film would soon be available for distribution to foreign television networks and stations or for cinema showings.

The agency has refused to show the film to newsmen pending completion and a decision by Mr. Shakespeare to authorize its distribution abroad. But it was understood that "Vietnam, Vietnam!" sought to portray the United States Government's side in the war controversy.

The act of Congress that set up the U.S.I.A. specifically barred domestic presentation of the agency's films. The only exception was the permission granted by Congress to allow distribution of the picture on the life of President Kennedy, produced after his assassination.



Associated Press

Frank J. Shakespeare Jr. reportedly has decided not to distribute the film.

Begun Under Johnson

The Kennedy film was produced by Bruce Herschensohn, then a freelance-moviemaker. Now the agency's assistant director for motion pictures and television, Mr. Herschensohn began producing the Vietnam picture during the last year of the Johnson Administration.

An agency official said that the production of the film was continued under the Nixon Administration "out of sheer bureaucratic momentum," although doubts had been arising in the agency.

The one-hour film reduced from footage of six-and-a-half hours was said to show the United States military assistance to the South Vietnamese armed forces, American military operations in Vietnam, and enemy atrocities.

It reportedly includes North Vietnamese film on the war, obtained in Tokyo last year, and public debates in the United States between antiwar spokesmen and advocates of Administration policies.

But, one official commented, "The film, as edited, tends to show the war critics in an unfavorable light."

In producing the film, Mr.

Ford repeatedly visited Vietnam with camera crews. He also had access to some film shot by commercial networks.

Despite lengthy production work, involving frequent changes in the shooting script to conform to the changing political situation, and numerous retakes, the agency does not believe that the cost of the Vietnam film was excessive.

They noted that the film on the moon flight of Apollo 11, which got huge worldwide exposure, cost \$212,000. Mr. Herschensohn's Kennedy film cost \$122,000, and the U.S.I.A. still regards it as its most successful effort in this field.

Mr. Herschensohn is known to believe that a film on Vietnam is necessary to counterbalance what he regards as the "one-sided" approach to the war in films produced by its opponents.

He is also known to believe that even if the film is not released in the immediate future, it will be a valuable contribution to scholars "in 1981 or 1999" and those "who are not yet born."

MORI/CDF