

Aide Says JFK Sought Family in Cuban Crisis

P. 11/5/65
NEW YORK, Nov. 7 (AP) — Former Presidential adviser Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. says that during the height of the Cuban missile crisis President Kennedy "sought out his wife and children as if the imminence of catastrophe had turned his mind more than ever toward his family . . ."

Schlesinger gives an account of the October 1962 crisis in Life Magazine's fifth installment of his forthcoming book, "A Thousand Days." The magazine article is entitled, "Cuba: To the Edge of the Nuclear Abyss."

Schlesinger says that during that fateful week, in intervals between high-level meetings, Kennedy's mind turned more and more toward his family and "through them to children everywhere in the world."

Schlesinger, an historian, writes that if Russian Premier Khrushchev had not backed down in his Oct. 27 letter, the United States was prepared for "some action against Cuba the next week." That letter gave Russian agreement to negotiate settlement for removal of Soviet missile bases from Cuba.

In a later meeting with the President, Schlesinger says:

"I asked why he thought Khrushchev had done such an amazing thing. He said that, first, it might draw Russia and China closer together, or at least strengthen the Soviet position in the Communist world, by showing that Moscow was capable of bold action in support of Communist revolution; second, it also would radically define the setting in which the Berlin problem could be reopened after the election; third, it would deal the U.S. a tremendous political blow.

"When I remarked that the Russians must have supposed that we would not respond, Kennedy said, 'They thought they had us either way. If we did nothing, we would be dead. If we reacted, they hoped to put us in an exposed position, whether with regard to Berlin or Turkey or the U.N.'"

The historian credits Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara with first suggesting a naval blockade, which was the course eventually followed.