



Fischetti from New York Herald Tribune, Inc.

"I figure if I keep working the staff hard enough, they won't have time for memoirs."

Acrimony of Cuba Crisis Is Recreated by Sorensen

By Chalmers M. Roberts
Washington Post Staff Writer

Theodore Sorensen's account of the Cuban missile crisis, published today, provides no major new disclosures of what went on during that critical 13-day period in October, 1962.

But the account from Sorensen's forthcoming book, printed in *Look* magazine, does add a number of facts and incidents and, above all, recreates the tense and sometimes acrimonious atmosphere within the Kennedy Administration.

Sorensen reports that "the only sour note" of the day on which the President revealed in a speech the facts about the Soviet missiles in Cuba was a Kennedy session with hastily gathered Congressional leaders.

Captious Advice

Some advice, says Sorensen, "was captious and inconsistent." And "many called the blockade irrelevant and indecisively slow, certain to irritate our friends, but doing nothing about the missiles. An invasion was urged by

powerful and diverse Democratic senators. Republicans said they would support the President, but wanted the record to show they had been informed at the last minute, not consulted."

President Kennedy "emerged, a bit angry himself" from the meeting, saying to Sorensen: "If they want this . . . job, they can have it; it's no great joy to me."

The President estimated to Sorensen that "the odds that the Soviets would go all the way to war" seemed to him "somewhere between one out of three and even."

While the President had ruled out an air strike at Cuba "convinced that there was no way of making certain all the missiles would be removed" that way, he had "decided tentatively on a single retaliatory strike" against a Soviet SAM (surface-to-air missile) site in Cuba if a U.S. reconnaissance plane were shot down. A U-2 was shot down but the President withheld the command to go ahead, preferring to wait one more day.

Sorensen reports that the

then Attorney General Robert Kennedy at the height of the crisis was sent to find out from the Soviet Ambassador whether any instructions had been issued to the captains of the Soviet ships about to be intercepted by the quarantine force. Reports Sorensen: "He learned nothing."

Later, a copy of the President's reply to Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev was delivered to the Ambassador by the Attorney General "with a strong verbal message: the point of escalation was at hand; the United States could proceed toward peace and disarmament" or there could be strong and overwhelming American retaliatory action.

Sorensen pictures early disagreements on how to meet the crisis. An unnamed participant, apparently the late Adlai Stevenson, wanted any military action accompanied by a big diplomatic package in which the President would propose "the demilitarization, neutralization and guaranteed territorial integrity of Cuba,

thus giving up Guantanamo, which he maintained was of little use to us, in exchange for the removal of the Soviet missile bases on the island."

"Alternately or subsequently," this adviser suggested withdrawal of Turkish and Italian-based missiles in exchange for withdrawal of the Cuban missile bases and other steps.

No Appeasement Hint

Sorensen comments that there was no hint of "appeasing the aggressor" in these plans, apparently a reference to attacks on Stevenson's ideas published shortly after the crisis ended. The President did beef up the political side of his speech and he "admired the courage" of those who argued their views. And Sorensen notes that even those known as "hard liners" had proposed a pledge to withdraw "all nuclear forces based in Turkey, aircraft as well as missiles."

As the crisis went on, "fatigue and disagreement" produced "more wrangling and irritability than usual." But just as pressures for either an air strike or invasion of Cuba "were rapidly and irresistibly growing," Khrushchev capitulated.

Lost His Temper

Sorensen reports that the President lost his temper because State Department spokesman Lincoln White at one point spoke out beyond the White House position; he phoned White, "his voice rising and language intensifying . . ."

And Sorensen himself took the precaution of keeping in the dark one of his three secretaries. The reason: her roommate worked for Sen. Kenneth Keating (R-N.Y.), who had been highly critical of the President's earlier reluctance to react to missile reports from Cuba.