

Minutes from Armageddon

Mar 5/66

by Jeremy J. Stone

First of all, it turns out that Elie Abel's *Missile Crisis* is a fascinating rewrite of *Dr. Strangelove*. How else can you explain: Ambassador David Bruce getting instructions to show up at an airport "alone and armed" to get some of the U-2 photos Acheson was taking to de Gaulle; de Gaulle showing more excitement at their technical quality than at the crisis itself; the Soviet ambassador in Washington completely in the dark

about the missiles and "absolutely certain" that the foreign minister was too; the President startled to discover that he still had missiles in Turkey - he distinctly remembered having given instructions to remove them; the Soviet espionage agent Fomin asking the re-

The Missile Crisis
by Elie Abel
(Lippincott: \$4.95)

porter Scali whether Scali's reply to Khrushchev's offer came from the "highest" sources; and Ambassador Dobrynin again, now in high spirits, marching up and down Bobby Kennedy's office reenacting an old scene in Khrushchev's. This stuff isn't stranger than fiction; it's satire.

But this book has a story to tell about the future. The more we learn about the crisis the more frightened we get, not for what happened but for how. Abel says, "How close we came to Armageddon, I did not fully realize until I started researching this book," but he may miss the real point. This recita-

tion may or may not describe a very close call, but it describes several we are going to have. It discloses how substantially our processes for decision are wanting: it discloses characteristics of the human and governmental condition that are more likely to lead to nuclear war than any particular Khrushchevian blunder. And as Schlesinger has paraphrased President Kennedy's conclusion: "The government could hardly have performed better."

There is first and foremost the willingness to risk all on the basis of arguments uncontaminated by serious and sustained criticism. In this, the participants convict themselves by their own testimony. They were unanimous in assessing the risks they were running as enormous. Here is Ambassador Thompson telling his wife that he would let her know where to go if the capital were evacuated; McNamara wondering how many more sunsets he was destined to see; Rusk telling Ball early one morning in the midst of the crisis that it was a considerable victory that "you and I are still alive." These responsible persons were a good deal vaguer about the dangers posed by the Soviet missiles. The Secretary of Defense counsels that the missiles in Cuba had little to do with the strategic balance, but he becomes persuaded that important political questions are at issue. Meanwhile the Secretary of State talks as if the military security of the country literally were at stake. He says about the airstrikes, "If we don't do this, we go down with a whimper. Maybe it's better to go down with a bang." Nowhere does anyone seem to discuss at length exactly in what way the national interest would be so severely damaged as to justify running the risks that all conceded their response would run.

Perhaps thoughts of "do nothing" strategies were quietly suppressed by signals from a President who - leadership demanding what it does - hardly could wait to reflect upon the dangers of as yet undrafted alternatives before choosing between the two postures available to him: "It doesn't matter," and "We won't stand for it." For whatever reason, there is a striking disproportion between our high appraisal of the dangers of dramatic response and our feeble efforts to analyze their necessity. For all practical purposes, our de-

liberations seem to have treated the introduction of missiles in Cuba as if they were self-evidently part of an ultimate and decisive show of force. This is the standard exaggeration from which the most serious conflicts arise.

Men simply do not have the capacity to gauge the forces at work in the world. The crisis opens with virtually universal agreement that the Soviets will not put missiles in Cuba—because they never put them in any other satellite country; it ends with our very real amazement at having won. In between, people say things in explication of their policies like: "I know the Soviets pretty well, I think they'll knock out our missile bases in Turkey . . . we'd then be obligated to knock out a base inside the Soviet Union . . . then we hope everyone will cool down and want to talk." And while other participants appreciate the insanity of this sort of thing, they have no real substitute for it. The story is all too human. The level of disorganized reasoning and response, which even Kennedy's Executive Committee showed, seems to make it a matter of time before, in another crisis, two groups of such men assume—not decide, but simply collectively assume—that the interests then at stake are so vital that the struggle must be won at any cost. Governments, as a bureaucratic whole, seem every bit as inclined to reach this pompous conclusion as any sensation-seeking journalist.

Abel evidently drew on a wide range of acquaintances in Washington because almost everyone gets that little protective phrase which is a journalist's reward for an hour of interviewing. Keating was "almost certainly justified"; Rusk "felt it was important to reserve his own position"; of Sylvester's misleading press statements, "it was hard to see how he could have done otherwise"; and so on. But on a fundamental disagreement on the military implications of the Soviet action, Abel clearly takes the side of Paul Nitze rather than McNamara; Nitze thought that the missiles might so threaten SAC bombers in the southwestern United States as to shift the existing strategic balance.

It does not seem to have crossed the minds of any of the participants that the missiles could have been, in part,

Gentlemen: If you purchase this shaver, we promise never to repair it.

But we will promise you this, and in writing: If anything goes wrong within one year we will send you an all-new ACCUMEN Shaver. After that one-year guarantee period, and if you are unhappy with the shaver for any reason, return it to us—even if it's thirteen years from now—and for just \$12.95 we'll send you the newest "top-of-the-line" model available at the time. (We fully realize that \$12.95 may be worth only \$2.95 thirteen years from now. But that's our hard luck). And then you can start this all over again with that new shaver—for another thirteen years if you wish. That's why we call it the "ACCUMEN LifeTime Shaver Plan."

If this sounds like an unprecedented offer, you are correct. It is. And if you think there must be some "gimmick" involved, you are also correct. There is. We would not stick our necks out so far and for so long if we weren't quite sure that the ACCUMEN will give you trouble-free satisfaction from now until the cows come home. What makes us so sure? Just this: We have observed the ACCUMEN's performance for years in Europe and since we introduced it to this country. We have talked to hundreds of really satisfied owners. We have "fan letters" by the score. Finally, we know what it's made of and how it's made. It will be a rare ACCUMEN that falters or disappoints.

This is the Ultimate Shaver—we think this is the finest shaver made in the world today. Cordless or otherwise. In our opinion it makes all others obsolete. Very few of our competitors describe their shavers as "second best," so we quite understand if you take all of these claims with a heaping spoonful of salt. But, here, for your consideration, are the principal reasons why we believe the ACCUMEN to be "The Ultimate."

1. The Powerplant: A high-potential nickel-cadmium battery, which will give you at least ten to fifteen good shaves before recharging. As an aside: The president of Witte & Sutor (manufacturers of the ACCUMEN) is none other than Herr Waldemar Witte, the inventor of the rechargeable flashlight. He ought to know!

2. The Motor: The "synchromesh" motor is a 6000 rpm. marvel of German engineering. Barium ferrite permanent magnets, self-lubricating bearings and copper-carbon brushes assure a long, hardworking life.

3. The Shaving Head: Shaving area 2½ times larger than that of any other rotary shaver. Ultrathin foil (.00315"). Four stainless steel cutters are individually sprung and balanced and can operate independently to adapt to the minutest contour of your face (this is a truly radical innovation—have you ever noticed how your present shaver is built on the same principle as a lawn mower?)

And then the marvelous extras: The patented "LumiRing" that spotlights the working area for perfect shaves in any light. Vacuum action that keeps your whiskers from your clothing. And, as far as we know, this is the only shaver in the civilized world that is rechargeable directly from any wall socket—no transformers, no "power cords." The ACCUMEN is lockable, to keep it exclusively yours (sorry, teenagers). Then, there is a built-in shave counter. Last, and probably least, women are wild about the ACCUMEN, because the shaving head is round and smooth and has no sharp edges. (But, please, buy her one of her own.)

Still more. The ACCUMEN is not just the finest shaver in the world. The optional attachments make it a complete grooming system—among other things. Look at the choice in the coupon and help yourself.



Should you Buy a Shaver by Mail—Sight Unseen? It may be unorthodox, but the only way to buy this shaver at this price (on this side of the Atlantic) is from us, the exclusive importer/retailers. Be that as it may—why not? What's the risk? You order the ACCUMEN not only with the one-year new-shaver guarantee; not only with the \$12.95 ACCUMEN LifeTime Shaver Plan, but with this added assurance:

Unconditional Promise: Try the ACCUMEN for two weeks. Then, if you don't agree it is indeed "The Ultimate," send it back to us and we'll return your money by air mail and write you a nice thank-you letter.

That's it. For the price of an ordinary, run-of-the-mill shaver you can now shave with the pride of Europe. The ACCUMEN. The Ultimate Shaver. The only electric shaver that shaves close enough (in the woods or at home) to satisfy "blade men." And the only shaver in the world that will never be repaired, but that offers the exclusive ACCUMEN LifeTime Shaver Plan.

STEP INTO A NEW WORLD OF SHAVING LUXURY-TODAY

TNR0305

Mail to: HAVERHILL'S
526 Washington St., San Francisco, Calif. 94111

Please enroll me in the ACCUMEN LifeTime Shaver Plan, subject to the stated guarantee. I will receive free the \$4.95 rechargeable flashlight if I purchase at least one attachment in addition to the ACCUMEN. Please send me the following:

- *ACCUMEN rechargeable shaver with zippered case, mirror and brush - \$24.95.
- *Hairclipper Attachment - \$4.95.
- *Massage/Hairbrush Attachments, both-\$4.95.
- *White Flashlight Attachment - \$3.95.
- *Yellow Blinker Attachment - \$3.95.
- Praktikus-5, all items marked with an *, in a beautiful zippered gift case, only \$39.95. (Instead of \$42.75 if purchased separately.)
- Automobile Charging Unit (12v or 6v)-\$4.95.
- Check incl. \$1 for Post. & Insur. Enclosed
- Diner's Am. Exp. Acct. # _____

California Residents Add 4% Sales Tax.

Name _____
Address _____

FREE!  Searching the World to bring you the Finest



To get this ACCUMEN LifeTime Shaver Plan going in a big way, we will be pleased to send you a gift. Order the ACCUMEN and at least one attachment now and we'll send you in addition a beautiful rechargeable flashlight—also by Witte & Sutor, the manufacturers of the ACCUMEN and inventors of the rechargeable flashlight. Regular retail price of this flashlight is \$4.95.

defensive Soviet reactions to our plans to make shifts in the future strategic balance. October, 1962, was the very month in which our first really usable ICBM's—the Minuteman—were being deployed, and our intention to build one a day for about three years(!) was well advertised. The Soviet inability to build even inferior ICBM's at more than about one a week presented it with strategic risks that would have left true counterparts of our own strategists hysterical with concern. If, indeed, a major Soviet motivation was to match US Minutemen with shorter-range missiles in Cuba, then our own failure to revise US missile procurement plans downward, as fast as we revised our estimate of the missile gap, was in part responsible for the crisis. It is instructive to reflect upon the possibility that the leadership of both sides were motivated by fears of an intolerable shift in the strategic balance.

That these and similar explanations have been given about as much consideration as heresy by the faithful; that Soviet specialists should be com-

monly referred to as "demonologists"; and, in particular, that their speculations should have been accorded the deference that Abel describes—all reflect an unfortunate analogy between the controversies of religion and the analysis of Soviet foreign policy. Abel says that Llewellyn Thompson won everyone's respect "by his astonishing readiness to produce at any hour of the day or night, a shrewd guess as to Khrushchev's likely response." The book unintentionally shows how shamelessly vulnerable was our leadership to the informed guesses of those who had read the forbidden books and seen the infidel in his natural habitat. It has to be said again: in the kingdom of the blind, the one-eyed man is king. Fortunately, our best Soviet experts are,

politically, as sophisticated and cautious as our presiding generals are naïve and bold.

Sorensen, Schlesinger, and now Abel—who adds significantly to their disclosures—are giving our citizens an eyeful of the way in which governments by the people work. What our highest public servants willed, dared, and feared, when the chips were down, now flows beyond the Washington Cocktail Circuit to Kansas City and Oshkosh. All can learn what, before, all who mattered knew. It's a good thing. Kennedy's generation teethed on how England slept. Another generation will learn how America reacted. The experiences we have with cataclysmic crises are too important to be wasted on those who may never face another.

Health Scandal, USA

by Michael Alderman

pigment is the magic factor, the infant mortality rate of white Americans is still greater than that of six other countries. The AMA is quick to point out that there is only a one-percent difference between the rate of Sweden and the US. But that statistic represents 40,000 dead babies every year. We cannot even take comfort in the hope that, in this best of all possible countries, things are getting better. In New York City, hardly a neglected backwater of American medicine, the infant mortality rate has been going up steadily since 1952 and is now 10 percent higher than it was then. A scandal?

This human waste and sorrow has led Mr. Tunley to wonder whether the nature of national health-care systems themselves might explain the differences. As even the casual observer knows, such questions are usually approached through a welter of descriptive phrases: "free enterprise," "socialized medicine," and "destroy the sanctity of the doctor-patient relationship." He describes our system as it is, including some of its off-beat and visionary nooks and crannies. Notable among the latter is the prepaid, comprehensive group-health programs, so successful and popular in the Far West, but virtually unknown east of the Rockies. Most

Marshall McLuhan

"Scanning McLuhan is like trying to fill a teacup from a firehose. One of the most significant books of our times."

—Howard Gossage

UNDER-STANDING MEDIA

The Extensions of Man

At all bookstores \$7.50;
paper \$1.95

McGRAW-HILL