

CIA Chief— A Product of Kennedy Era

Washington

The new head of the American spy and intelligence community brings no expertise in espionage to his job, but rather a keen background in American politics and a presidential loyalty that President-elect Jimmy Carter found attractive.

In fact, Theodore C. Sorensen said at a news conference in Plains, Ga., yesterday that he had not sought the dual appointment of director of central intelligence and head of the Central Intelligence Agency, but "because this assignment is central to the maintenance of a secure peace in the world, I did not feel I could turn him down."

Sorensen, 48, will be returning to Washington after a 13-year absence. The assassination of John F. Kennedy had cut short his already illustrious career as the president's "chief of staff for ideas," a man intimately involved in most of Kennedy's crucial decisions and whose gift for words can be found in the inaugural address and most other Kennedy speeches to the nation.

In introducing Sorensen at the news conference, Carter noted that he was "very conversant" with foreign affairs, and under Kennedy had attended National Security Council meetings and "knows at first hand the inner workings of the decision-making process within the White House."

More important were Carter's subsequent remarks — that Sorensen had been chosen because of "my trust in him, my knowledge of him, his very acute intelligence." And aides to Carter said that he met Sorensen early in the campaign, that Sorensen had provided good ideas on foreign policy positions and had helped draft key Carter speeches such as his acceptance address to the Democratic National Convention last July.

Carter "wanted Ted Sorensen in an important job and the CIA was it," the aide said.

Sorensen said at the news conference that he would be a cautious director of the CIA. He said he would not seek to end the agency's "covert activities," but said such activities should be accountable to Congress and approved by the president.

Sorensen's first dramatic exposure to foreign affairs came in 1961, Kennedy's first year in the White House, when Sorensen was brought belatedly into the Bay of Pigs fiasco which had been planned by the CIA in the last year of the Eisenhower administration and approved by Kennedy. It was to be Kennedy's worst foreign blunder.

After Kennedy's death, Sorensen wrote two books, one on decision-making in the White House, the other a 783-page book on those years called "Kennedy." He then joined the prestigious New York law firm of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton and Garrison, where he has been a partner.

As part of his law practice, Sorensen said he was represented American corporations abroad, and several foreign governments, including Zaire, Iran, Sierra Leone, and the Canadian province of Newfoundland. He has traveled widely, including a "campaign" trip to Moscow in 1970 when he sought unsuccessfully to win the Democratic nomination for senator in New York.

To his associates, Sorensen is no less a tireless worker than he was in the Kennedy years, when he developed an ulcer. He has been close to the Kennedy clan through the years.

He advised Robert F. Kennedy in his successful race for the Senate and during the ill-fated primary campaign in 1968 when Kennedy was assassinated.

Theodore Chaikin Sorensen was born on May 8, 1928, in Lincoln, Neb. His father, Christian, was of Danish origin and a liberal Republican who rose to become state attorney general and a supporter of Senator George Norris.

His mother, Annis, was of Russian-Jewish background. She gave her maiden name to her five children. Theodore has three brothers and one sister.

After graduation with honors from the University of Nebraska and in 1951 from the Nebraska Law School, Sorensen went to Washington, where he first worked for the predecessor-agency of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and then joined John Kennedy's staff in 1953 — Kennedy's first year as senator.

Sorensen has been married three times. He and his current wife, Gilian Martin, were married in 1969. They have one daughter, Juliet; Sorensen has three sons, Eric, Stephen and Philip, from an earlier marriage.

According to his aides, Sorensen is an avid tennis player and has been the pitcher on the law firm's softball team.

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