

Theodore Chaikin Sorensen

NYTimes

By BERNARD GWERTZMAN

DEC 24 1976

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 23—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 Presidential loyalty that President-elect Carter found attractive. In fact, Theodore C. Sorensen said at a news conference this morning in Plains, Ga., 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."

Mr. Sorensen, who is 48 years old, will be returning to Washington after a 13-year absence. The assassination of President Kennedy cut short Mr. Sorensen's career as the President's "chief of staff for ideas," a man intimately involved in most of Mr. Kennedy's crucial decisions, whose gift for words can be found in Mr. Kennedy's Inaugural Address and most other Kennedy speeches.

Mr. Carter, in introducing Mr. Sorensen at the news conference, sought to underscore Mr. Sorensen's limited exposure to foreign affairs and intelligence work by noting that he was "very conversant" with foreign affairs, and under President Kennedy had attended meetings of the National Security Council and knew "at first hand the inner workings of the decision-making process within the White House."

'Trust' and 'Intelligence' Cited

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

Mr. Carter, the aide said, "wanted Ted Sorensen in an important job and the C.I.A. was it."

There have been two types of appointments as C.I.A. director since the agency was created in 1947.

Some, like Allen W. Dulles and Richard Helms, were veterans of espionage wars, conversant in the world of clandestine sources and highly refined intelligence estimates, as well as the sometimes unsavory covert actions that in the past had overthrown governments and started paramilitary operations that were later to produce the cries for C.I.A. reform that dominated much of the headlines from Capitol Hill in the last two years.

Cautious Leadership at C.I.A.

Others, like the current director, George Bush, who will hold the job until Jan. 20, were politicians who had a general knowledge of foreign affairs and a keen intelligence but were regarded as "outsiders" to the thousands who work at the C.I.A.'s headquarters in Langley, Va., and elsewhere.

Mr. Sorensen, who looked remarkably similar to the clean-cut, well-spoken Kennedy aide of another era, told the news conference that he would be a cautious director of the C.I.A. He said

that he would not seek to end the agency's "covert activities," but added that they should be accountable to Congress and approved by the President, and that "the chances of success are high and the cost of doing the same job in a public, overt manner would be too high."

Ironically, Mr. Sorensen's first dramatic exposure to foreign affairs came in April 1961, three months after Mr. Kennedy's inauguration, when he was belatedly brought into the Bay of Pigs operation—the unsuccessful invasion of Cuba that had been planned by the C.I.A. in the last year of the Eisenhower Administration and approved by President Kennedy. It was to be Mr. Kennedy's worst foreign blunder; it ultimately cost Mr. Dulles his job, and caused distrust of the C.I.A. in the Kennedy Administration.

After Mr. Kennedy's assassination in 1963, Mr. Sorensen wrote two books, one on decision-making in the White House and the other a 783-page book on the Kennedy Administration. He then joined the New York law firm of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, where he has been a partner, and according to an aide, drawing a salary in six figures.

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

Close to the Kennedys

To his associates, Mr. Sorensen is no less tireless a worker now than he was in the Kennedy years. And he has remained close to the Kennedy family.

Mr. Sorensen advised Robert F. Kennedy in his successful race for the Senate in 1964 and in his ill-fated Presidential primary campaign in 1968, which ended with his assassination in Los Angeles. Mr. Sorensen has been at reunions of Kennedy people and has often written of those years with clarity, nostalgia and candor.

Theodore Chaikin Sorensen was born on May 8, 1928, in Lincoln, Neb. His father, Christian, was of Danish origin and a liberal Republican who became Attorney General of Nebraska and a supporter of Senator George Norris. His mother, Annis, was a Russian Jew who gave her maiden name to her five children—Mr. Sorensen has three brothers and a sister.

After graduating with honors from the University of Nebraska and, in 1951, from the Nebraska law school, Mr. Sorensen went to Washington, where he first worked for the agency that preceded the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and then joined Mr. Kennedy's staff in 1953—his first year as senator.

Mr. Sorensen has been married three times; he was married to his current wife, Gillian Martin, in 1969. They have a daughter, Juliet, and he has three sons—Eric, Stephen and Philip—from an earlier marriage.

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