

Castro Peace Bid to JFK Told in Book

NEW YORK — (AP) — In the three months before his assassination, President Kennedy showed a cautious but favorable response to overtures by Prime Minister Fidel Castro of Cuba for a resumption of diplomatic relations, a new book says.

Details of preliminary confidential diplomatic talks are given in the book, "The Reds and the Blacks," to be published next Thursday by Harper & Row.

The author is William Attwood, who in the fall of 1963 served on the U. S. delegation to the United Nations.

Before that, Attwood was President Kennedy's ambassador to Guinea and subsequently he was appointed by President Johnson as ambassador to Kenya.

NOW EDITOR

Attwood now is editor in chief of Look magazine.

An aide to Sen. Robert F. Kennedy (D-N. Y.) said the senator is acquainted with the book and considers it "essentially accurate."

The overtures by Castro were said to have begun in September, 1963.

Attwood says he had received hints from other sources that Castro was

growing restive under Communist pressures and was prepared to make "substantial concessions" to achieve an accommodation with the United States.

QUIET CONTACT

Attwood says he suggested to Adlai E. Stevenson, U. S. Ambassador to the United Nations, and to Averell Harriman of the State Department that quiet contact be made with the Cuban delegation to the UN to find out "if in fact Castro did want to talk on our terms."

Harriman favored the idea but advised Attwood to explore it with Robert Kennedy "because of its political implications."

Meanwhile, the book relates, Stevenson discussed the matter with President Kennedy.

The President approved the notion of Attwood conferring with Dr. Carlos Lechunga, the chief Cuban delegate, "so long as I made it clear we were not soliciting discussions."

Attwood says that a few days later Lechunga told him there was a strong chance Castro would invite him to Cuba.

Robert Kennedy is quoted in the book as saying he thought it would be preferable if such a private session were held outside of Cuba, possibly in Mexico.

'PUT ON ICE'

Attwood says he encountered Lechunga soon after President Kennedy's assassination and Lechunga said he had been instructed by Castro on Nov. 23 to begin "formal discussions" with Attwood.

Attwood writes that he informed McGeorge Bundy, a presidential assistant, of what Lechunga had told him.

"... I informed Bundy and later was told that the Cuban exercise would probably be put on ice for a while — which it was and where it has been ever since," Attwood writes.