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## An End to the Arms Race?

### New York

"The arms race today is a kind of national dance that nobody knows how to stop and nobody takes seriously.

**"I don't believe that any Russian or American leader now seriously thinks that any weapons they're building could possibly be used. That wasn't the case 20 years ago."**

Jerome B. Wiesner, president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, ought to know. He was involved in the atomic bomb tests at Bikini in

1946, was a leader in the fight for the nuclear test ban treaty and has been science adviser to two presidents — John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson.

Knowing intimately the complex, yet fragile tie between the man in the White House and the signal that could begin a nuclear holocaust, Wiesner said frankly he had fears of such an action during the last days of the Nixon administration when the former president was "clearly besieged."

"Actually, that bothered me a lot earlier than the final week (of Nixon's presidency). I figured by that time enough people were conscious of the problem so that it would be under control.

"However, I was greatly troubled in the earlier days when Nixon was clearly besieged but it wasn't as generally recognized. It was very conceivable that he could have done something and the machinery of government wouldn't have been ready to respond properly.

"I remember, for instance, when the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was testifying before the Armed Services Committee about the Cambodian bombing. Senator Stuart Symington asked him why he had lied, why he had done it. He said because his commander-in-chief had ordered him to.

**Then Symington said, "Would you do anything your commander-in-chief ordered you to?" He hesitated a long minute and then he said, 'Yes.' For-**

## 'We've both come to understand how nutty the whole thing is'

fortunately, those who were in a position to create an international incident were wise enough not to.

"I'm not sure we can always count on that kind of discretion."

However, discretion coupled with a reputation as a progressive, outspoken crusader has always been the Wiesner trademark and made him right enough of the time to earn the respect of people in science and politics — two fields that seldom see a happy marriage.

If you ask Wiesner to sum up his philosophy, he'll tell you, "You either get things done, or you get credit for them." He has done both.

When he was named MIT's 13th president in 1971, Wiesner came in endorsed by conservative and liberals. The conservatives liked him because he had paid his dues working through the university's hierarchy, first as dean of science and then provost. The liberals considered him one of their own as well.

Since assuming his office, Wiesner feels the best thing he has done for his university is "to leave it alone. I've tried to give the faculty and students the opportunity to do what they wanted and then just be supportive.

"I think the main criticism of MIT right now is that we have not responded enough to social problems — like energy, pollution, food and just helping to make a more humane world. We're trying to do that now."

Part of those efforts to create a more humane scientific outlook has meant a move away from weapons research and the money provided for that by Defense Department agen-

cies — which at one time included a yearly aggregate budget of \$120 million, mostly for the operation of MIT's Instrumentation Laboratory and the Lincoln Laboratory.

Today, only the Lincoln Laboratory remains, with the Defense Department kicking in only \$80 million of the university's overall budget of \$325 million. That \$80 million is not for weapons research, according to an MIT spokesman.

The arms race and disarmament have been two of Wiesner's main concerns since 1957. As part of the Gaither Committee, a group commissioned that year by then President Eisenhower, he participated in a study of America's military posture. The result was his subsequent leadership in a push for a nuclear test ban treaty and his belief today that the U.S. should be pressing harder for disarmament.

"I think arms control is possible," he said. "But I'm not foolish enough to think it's about to happen in the next five years. But one thing has come out of the dialog on the subject between the U.S. and the USSR — we've both come to understand how nutty the whole thing is."

Although he finds the mood between America and Russia considerably mellowed today, he is not certain it indicates real progress.

How would Wiesner describe the arms race today?

"Disturbing," he says. "Twenty years ago, I would have said it was frightening, but today I don't find it quite so much so. Maybe I've just gotten very used to it."