

# Man and Missiles

## *The Rise of the Schlesinger Strategy*

By Stephen S. Rosenfeld

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**I**N THE NIGHT CLUB of Moscow's Infourist Hotel just 11 days ago, Henry Kissinger—the most celebrated diplomat of the century, a man hailed as the giant and savior of the Nixon presidency—grimly and all but openly confessed that he had been bested in political combat, on the largest single issue of his 5½ years at the President's side, by a little known, newly elevated bureaucrat whose first name a lot of people still mistakenly think is "Arthur."

For it was plainly Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger, his Harvard classmate, to whom Kissinger was referring on the American side when he offered his view of why Richard Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev had failed to find controls on strategic offensive arms. "Both sides have to convince their military establishments of the benefits of restraint," he said, "and that does not come naturally to military people on either side."

In the Pentagon's pasty-white, windowless Room 2E781 only a few hours later, James Schlesinger dropped his rangy frame in a too-small chair, lit up the pipe whose puffs punctuate this 45-year-old ex-professor's starchy prose, and declared that he fully endorsed the results of the third Nixon-Brezhnev summit. Could Kissinger have been alluding to him? Puff. "We have firm civilian control in this country?" Puff. "There's no problem here." Puff.

Watching Schlesinger, I felt it was a moment of passage: Power in Washington was shifting, or seemed to be shifting, and slabs of history seemed to be turning, too. For Schlesinger, a man of soft-spoken, hard-edged brilliance who has devoted his career as an academic and a government administrator to the theory and practice of national security, is more than a new superstar in an administration increasingly bereft of presidential leadership. He is a central figure, for all of his public anonym-

ity, in a Washington drama and in a world drama, too.

There was a special logic, even fate, in the political accident that brought someone of his formidable personal talents and somber strategic preferences to the Pentagon last year just as the Soviet missile program and the Soviet performance in the Mideast war were provoking American doubts about whether Mr. Nixon's and Kissinger's "structure of peace" could be built after all. There was a special irony for an intellectual with a deep fear of the ways in which politics can shadow policy to be appointed defense chief by a President who has infused policy with politics. And there may be a special riddle, too.

### The 'Exercise of Power'

**H**E DIDN'T PLAN his path to the Pentagon, Schlesinger insisted to me when I came to call in his giant Pentagon office. With his Harvard Ph.D., he was teaching economics at the University of Virginia but found it too tame and left in 1957 for the National War College.

There he wrote "The Political Economy of National Security," in which he laid aside "the awful irresponsibility of the academician" and donned the Cold War strategist's robes. "We have not reconciled ourselves emotionally to the need for the continued exercise of power to protect our interests," he wrote. He called for alertness to the "outthrust of Soviet power," urging Americans to "maintain a constant sense of urgency about our international posture" and to "become adjusted to the heavy costs of limited war as a condition of life."

Already a registered Republican, mainly out of an attraction to the party's philosophy of limited government, he identified the "gravest contemporary problem" as "reconciling the free-market economy with the necessity of maintaining powerful forces in being for protection and as a diplomatic tool in the Cold War." Summits, he observed, "foster the illusion that a general settlement may be reached."

Schlesinger sticks by the substance

of this early book still, noting that only people without an intellectual framework change their view rapidly.

His years at the War College and later at Rand, Schlesinger recalls fondly as a period when the intellectual community was "fully meshed with the purposes of the United States government." Looking back at Vietnam, he concedes that maybe defense intellectuals were not critical enough; maybe he should have paid more heed himself. But, he says, Vietnam was not really a military problem, it was a political problem; we were drawn in "by idealistic notions and by political forces that no President could have withstood." He remembers feeling early on that we were going to be trapped. There was at the time "a gung-ho anti-communism which sometimes exaggerated the importance of real estate." And later, "having gotten involved in saving Vietnam, our policies, relied too heavily on the simplistic use of force."

These are all judgments uttered in retrospect, and without passion. As Secretary of Defense, Schlesinger is now preoccupied by trying to restore what the Vietnam war took away — took away from the military's self-confidence, from the country's readiness to support the military, from the level of our forces, from the closeness of the NATO alliance. But as a defense scholar, he hardly noticed the loss.

### 'Two-and-a-Half Cheers'

**O**N THE CONTRARY, he was establishing himself as one of the country's premier analysts of the military budget, bureaucracy and decision-making process. "To the initiated," he wrote, "the budget can be a dramatic document representing, as it does, the financial embodiment of national policy."

He was an early partisan of systems analysis, a technique for quantifying choices whose military applications were shaped in good part at Rand and brought to the Pentagon in the early 1960s by Robert S. McNamara. To him, analysis was a way for rationality (and defense intellectuals) to penetrate the Pentagon.



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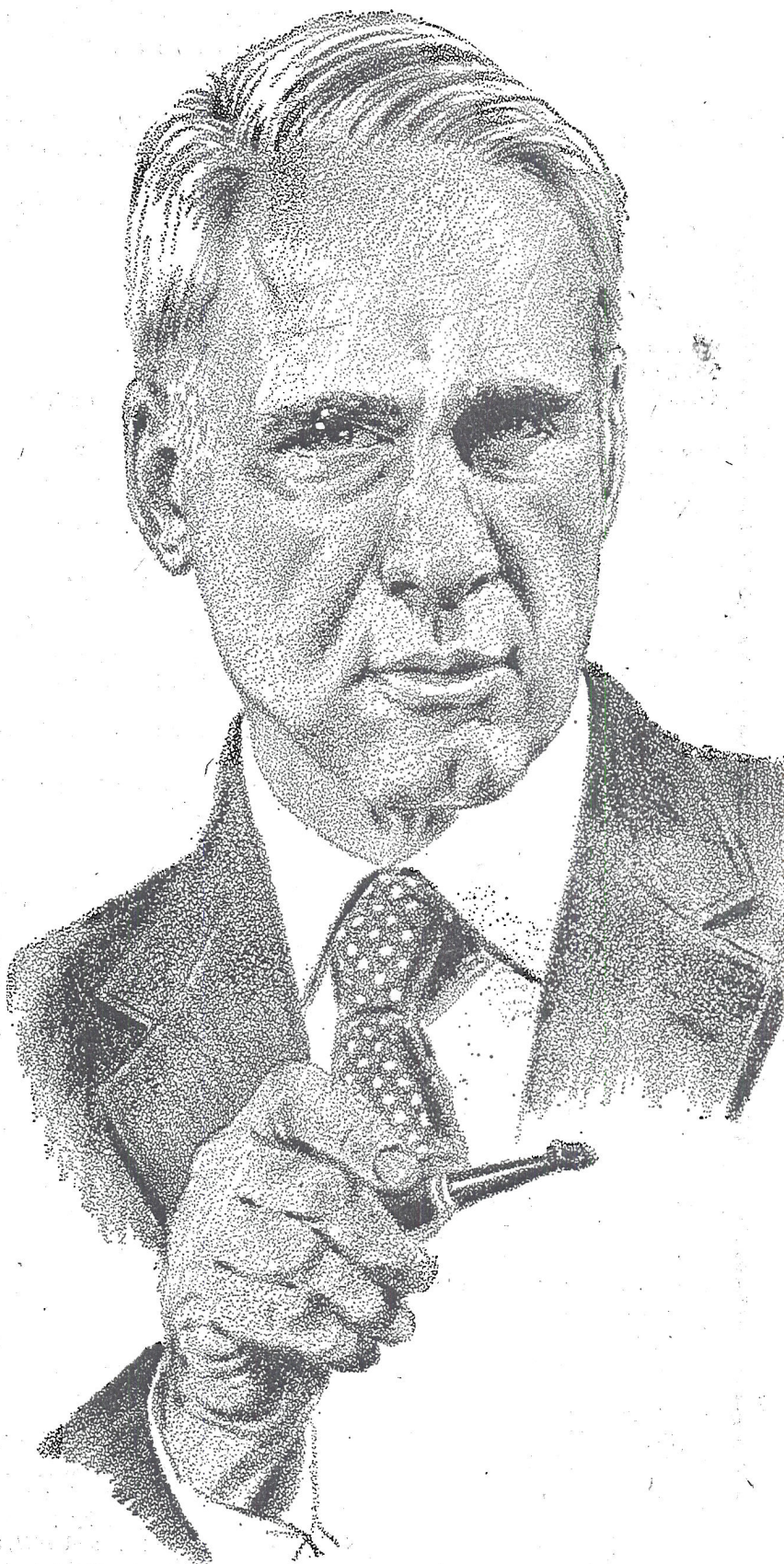
By 1968, however, in a study ("The Uses and Abuses of Analysis") presented to Sen. Henry Jackson's national security subcommittee, he had backed off to "two-and-a-half cheers." The absent half-cheer represented a bow to military judgment—a bow duly appreciated by military men.

Comfortable as he was, intellectually and personally, in the defense scholar's world of think tanks, consultancies and conferences, Schlesinger was drawn—by intellectual rigor and, I suspect, by a sense of curiosity about power—to the broader study of politics and defense.

Schlesinger has been worrying for years about how to accustom Americans to "heavy and permanent" defense spending. Because of budgetary "negligence," he thought in 1960, the United States was tempting "a vast political disaster." Even today, when some people explain skepticism toward defense in terms of a post-Vietnam tendency to ask what security those billions have bought, Schlesinger leans to explanations suggesting a certain built-in cultural vulnerability of democracy. To his military commanders he shows the big poster he keeps by his Pentagon desk. It quotes Tocqueville on the "inferior" capacity of democracies to conduct foreign relations.

Not everyone would grant that the insular world in which Tocqueville lived gives his anxieties continuing relevance. But Schlesinger the intellectual, a man who spent the Vietnam decade contemplating the antiseptic abstrusities of nuclear strategy, is clearly comforted by the notion that he is coping with a problem of historical dimensions, and a civilian problem at that. He is aware that this is sweet music to the ears of professional military men, who are eager (as he is for them) to get the Vietnam monkey off their backs. They see Schlesinger not as one of them—he drifts off at staff meetings as soon as the intellectual tone declines—but as their ambassador, and a good one, to the civilian world.

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Lucille Carter



## SCHLESINGER, From Page C1

Schlesinger joined the Nixon administration in 1969 as No. 2 man at the Budget Bureau, ran the Atomic Energy Commission, briefly took over the Central Intelligence Agency and — when Watergate produced Elliot Richardson's sudden shift from Defense to Justice — became the country's defense chief in May 1973. Former Deputy Defense Secretary David Packard, Mr. Nixon's first replacement choice, turned the job down and recommended Schlesinger, Richardson and Gen. Alexander Haig, now the President's White House chief of staff, agreed.

A family man (eight children) and homebody entirely unknown to readers of capital society pages, Schlesinger had made little splash. Some observers, noting his Harvard Ph.D. and his birdwatching and his interest in classical music and recalling that he had once dismissed a military chart-and-slide briefing as "Pentagon baloney," suspected he was anti-military—a dove's dream. Others, noting his technical and administrative strengths and his lack of political experience and public stature, figured he would not be getting anywhere near the administration's center of power.

He discounts, though others in Washington do not, the suggestion that Sen. Jackson's long and ardent regard for him played any role in his selection. President Nixon picked him, he thinks, for his "cast of mind," by which he means his belief in maintaining both conventional combat capability and the strategic balance, and for his "prudent sympathy for arms control." ("Prudent" and "exuberant" stand at the poles of Schlesinger rhetoric.) Mr. Nixon gave him no specific orders.

He quickly made a mark on Capitol Hill, where he has personally lobbied as many as 70 senators in one stretch to coax out the desired forces and funds. Vice President Ford has publicly criticized Schlesinger for failing to resolve to Ford's satisfaction a House jurisdictional dispute over Vietnam aid; Ford has suggested that, if he becomes President, he would drop Schlesinger. But otherwise his congressional record is good.

He impresses conservatives by his cost-cutting and intellectuality, Rep. F. Edward Hebert, the shrewd Louisianian who runs the House Armed Services Committee, told me that Schlesinger could be the best Defense Secretary since James Forrestal, the first. Les Aspin, Hebert's champing junior colleague, observes ruefully that Schlesinger is successfully riding the wave of the Congress' general jitters these days about the Russians.

Schlesinger's way is to stress not the putative Communist menaces on the near horizon but our broad and continuing responsibilities in an unendingly troubled world. His budget pitch dwells on the point that, although the dollar figure is at a post-World War II high, the defense budget reflects *percentage* reductions in public spending and the portion of GNP devoted to defense, and *numerical* reductions in uniformed men, men abroad and various hardware categories. Then, too, inflation, fuel price increases and congressionally mandated military-pay raises shrink the defense dollar.

Particularly for conventional forces, Schlesinger tells Congress, the U.S. should convert "not swords into plowshares but fat into swords." He added to me that the further savings which might be made by altering service roles and missions are precluded by the fact that congressional liberals, whose political support would be crucial to such changes, either "dissociate themselves from defense or focus on trivia, like limousines." That leaves service-oriented conservatives in congressional charge.

### Dealing With Kissinger

IT IS NOT in dealing with the Congress over the budget, however, but in dealing with Kissinger over high policy that Schlesinger's star has come to rise. The starting point, of course, was that detente—Kissinger's creature—was faltering. Schlesinger seemed careful, tough, cool, in phase with the town's anxieties. He was "new," untouched personally by Watergate. Most to the point, he arrived at the Pentagon with a formidable knowledge of what was becoming the big national security issue—the issue defining power relationships in Washington—of the second Nixon term: strategic arms.

Earlier, Kissinger had monopolized the issue with his intellectual, bureaucratic and public relations razzle dazzle. Melvin Laird, Nixon's first-term defense chief, had concentrated on withdrawing from Vietnam and had never gotten deeply into strategy—an area of policy dominated like few others by the handful of men, such as Schlesinger and Kissinger, who have been at it for years.

Quickly, Schlesinger began to broadcast his view that the SALT I agreement of 1972, setting numerical limits on offensive strategic arms for five years, had given Moscow "advantages" which would have to be either restrained by a subsequent SALT agreement or, failing that, matched by an American arms buildup. If the Russians, "married" their developing warhead technology to the lifting power ("throw weight") of their new missiles, he said, they could attain strategic superiority.

As though to punctuate his anxiety,



the Russians were by then (mid-1973) testing four new types of long-range heavy missiles. At the same time they began their long-expected tests of MIRV, the multi-warhead missile which has come most to symbolize the implacable advance of strategic weapons technology.

Implicit in Schlesinger's level-voiced alarms was the suggestion that diplomacy by itself is inadequate to deal with an adversary so relentless as the Kremlin. Kissinger would surely agree that diplomacy unsupported by strength is of no avail. Kissinger's own diplomacy, however, partly because of his and Mr. Nixon's tendency to oversell it, had fostered the notion that their own skills had somehow combined with a latent Russian reasonableness to make possible the onset of detente. At the heart of the Nixon-Kissinger pursuit of a "structure of peace" after all, is the premise that both sides are willing, equally willing, to build it. The Soviet missile tests seemed to many in Washington to call that premise into question—no matter that most Americans ignored the three-a-day pace at which the United States is MIRVing its own missiles.

Schlesinger himself went a step further by publicly describing the Secretary of State, patronizingly, as a "diplomatist"—defined by Webster as "one who is dexterous, tactful, or artful in meeting situations without arousing antagonism"—and by pronouncing himself "delighted to leave diplomacy in the main (sic) to Dr. Kissinger." It was he, not Kissinger, who repeatedly aired the possibility of resuming the bombing of North Vietnam; who hinted that the United States might consider using force to get Arab oil flowing; who declared that the Soviets were "seeking strategic advantage."

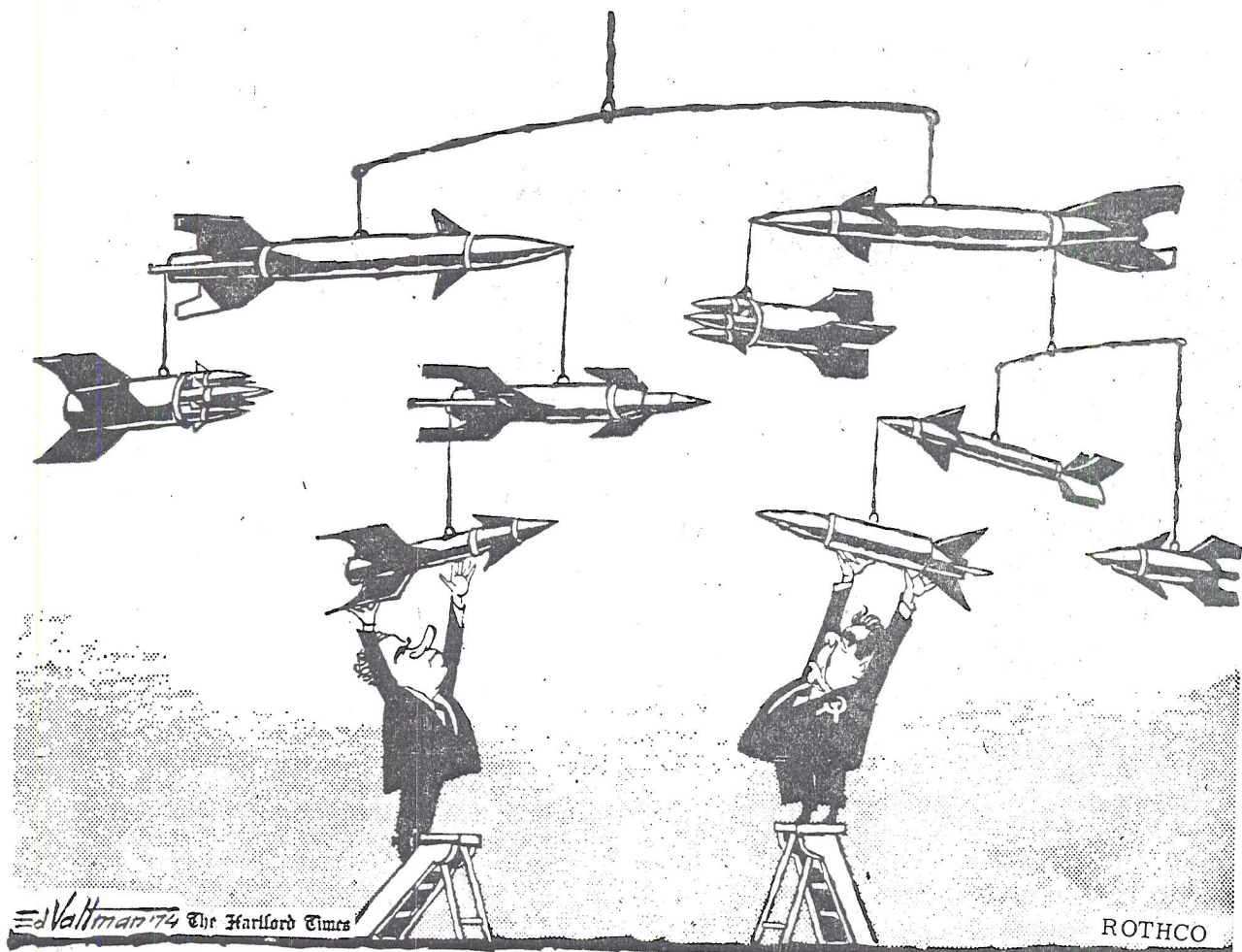
## Rivalry Discounted

THE TWO MEN breakfast alone weekly and otherwise see and talk with each other often. In the past, both have been quick to brush off any suggestion of rivalry on any level. One official familiar with all their exchanges, however, reported in May that "nuances" of difference exist, at least in the "pre-crunch" period before major decisions are made. This official noted that as Defense Secretary Schlesinger must respond to a demanding constituency—the military and its supporters—for which a Secretary of State has no counterpart.

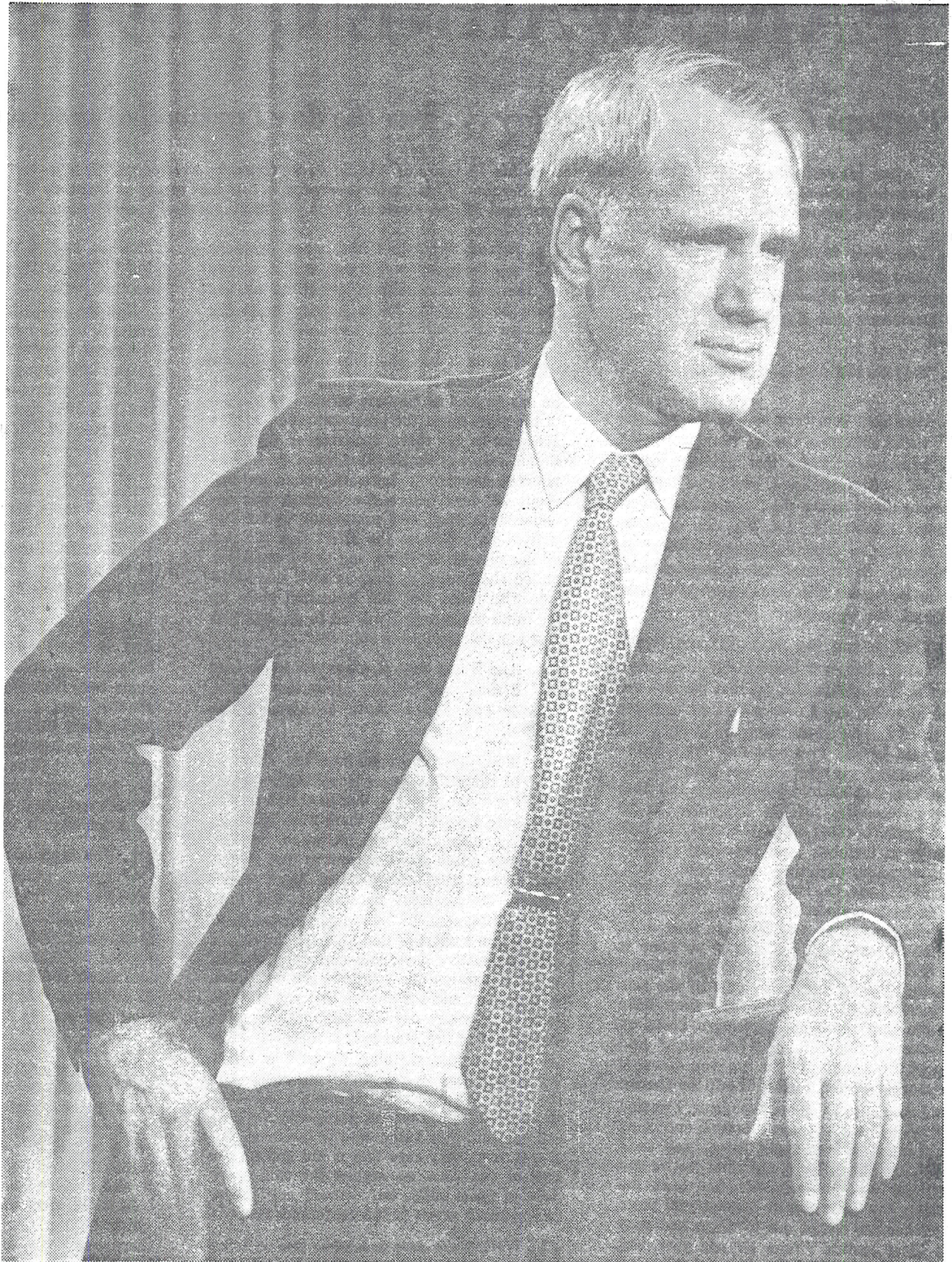
Kissinger, with his greater access to and interest in the press, seems to have been more active than Schlesinger in publicizing the fact and some of the details of his differences with Schlesinger, as he did the other day in his Moscow appeal for military "restraint." Schlesinger seemed intent on avoiding a personal edge in his reply. It will be interesting to see if and how he responds to a recent article claiming that early in the Mideast war, Schlesinger balked Kissinger's appeals and the President's orders for the prompt resupply of Israel. Schlesinger is known to regard that version, which presents Kissinger favorably, as "poppycock," but his detailed response is not yet in.

Behind the most intriguing personal and professional chemistry in Washington is the genuine and profound complexity of the new world situation we are in. For the first time in the nuclear age, the United States has lost its clear strategic and political predominance, and the relative freedom of action, the luxury of affording major errors, and the essential self-confidence which predominance bestowed.

John Kennedy, at his inaugural, demanded that our arms be "sufficient beyond doubt." Richard Nixon, in his first news conference as President, settled on nuclear "sufficiency," later ex-







By Joe Heiberger—The Washington Post



pressed as Soviet-American "parity." But arrival at these concepts or slogans only opened a debate on what they mean.

Given the global scope of the alliances and commitments which the United States contracted in its years of predominance, what is "sufficiency" now? Given the apples-and-oranges nature of Soviet and American strategic forces—they have no equivalent to our 7,000 "tactical" warheads in Europe, for instance—what is "parity"? Given the technological, bureaucratic, political and emotional pressures which spur arms building, how can strategic arms be controlled? Given the world-destroying power of strategic weapons and the fact that they are at the disposal of frail men who use them for political purposes—such as wielding influence—as well as for defense, how can nuclear war best be deterred?

Strategists pondering these brain-busters tend to fall into two broad schools, Rep. Aspin has suggested. The stability school, fearful that the building and political brandishing of nuclear weapons may get out of control, stresses that we and the Russians have already achieved the maximum practical deterrence of nuclear war by being able to inflict immense destruction on the other side's people and industry, even if the other side strikes first.

But the opposing credibility school, including Schlesinger, worries that despite this fact of "mutual assured destruction," the Russians could still reap *political* advantage if they were *perceived* either to possess strategic advantage or to be moving towards it eight or ten years hence (the lead time on new missiles) without the United States trying to restrain or match them.

and more powerful missile warheads. He said the United States would hold back these projects only if the Soviets accepted certain limits on programs of their own.

At the recent summit, no such deal was struck so the United States is going ahead with R & D on the new warheads. Their significance is that they conspicuously embody the volatile political symbolism of an intent or capability of a first strike against land-based missiles. Anticipating such a strike, a government under stress could conceivably commit a rash act, or cave.

Again, Schlesinger argues that this and other new proposals do not menace the Soviet Union, which at any rate retains its invulnerable sea-based missiles and retains as well the option of slowing its own programs in the context of a summit or SALT.

Like many strategic thinkers, however, he views SALT not as the public views it, as a forum in which arms reductions can be negotiated, but as a medium of communication — hopefully producing greater stability and confidence, if not actual arms reductions—between the Soviet and American leaderships. His critics counter by contending that he is pushing the United States government and the Kremlin into an unnecessary, costly and destabilizing new round of the arms race—hardly the avowed purpose of SALT.

### Nukes or Nuances

**T**HE RUSSIANS, who have treated Kissinger with kid gloves, have often and sharply criticized Schlesinger — for casting aspersions on Soviet motives, for promoting a budget and strategy suggestive of the Cold War and for trying to negotiate "from strength." In turn, Kissinger and Schlesinger have appeared to be following contrasting theories on how best to influence Soviet behavior.

Kissinger, who deals with the Russians, has wanted to frame SALT proposals with an eye not only to American strategic requirements but also to Soviet political nuances. He apparently has come close to believing, or hoping, that Brezhnev has a large and risky personal commitment to detente and is under heavy pressure from Defense Minister Andrei Grechko. It would follow that American steps which look unduly tough or provocative should be examined carefully lest they provide helpful political ammunition to the Grechko elements.

Moreover, as in other negotiating areas, Kissinger in arms control has been eager to sustain a diplomatic process, if only to head off the hardening which results when diplomacy is derailed.

Schlesinger, however, with no experience in and no responsibility for negotiations, seems to look chiefly at American strategic requirements. He believes that policy differences indicated in the Kremlin fade from importance in view of the actual working consensus within the Soviet government. He has long felt that inside Soviet policy circles, personalities and their public statements mean less than "the real trend in (military) capabili-

ties." Translation: count nukes, not nuances. He would, therefore, send Moscow clear signals of American firmness — "ammunition for the more prudent Soviets" to use in internal debate against "hardliners" or prospective "risk takers."

By any "fair-minded assessment," Schlesinger goes on, the Russians will not read the American strategic posture as an attempt to gain superiority or to weaken their deterrent. Thus does he deprecate the possibility that some Russians — Moscow has yet to deploy one MIRV — may wonder why the Nixon administration is now already midway through a program to add three new MIRVs a day for five years. Thus are his recommendations for the American negotiating stance at SALT directed much less at sustaining a diplomatic dialogue than at reaching a particular strategic result. If diplomacy cannot produce that result, Schlesinger says in effect, too bad.

### More Than a Hawk

**A**T THE RECENT Moscow summit, diplomacy did not produce either the more limited momentum-building MIRV agreement sought by Kissinger or the more extensive controls sought — though, I suspect, not seriously expected — by Schlesinger. Perhaps the Russians were not in a mood anyway to have gone the Kissinger route, if the President himself had wanted to go it. But the President did not. To Kissinger's evident dismay, he went with Schlesinger.

Schlesinger's views, even his harshest critics concede, proceed from strategic, not political, considerations. Yet in this instance, the President's support for these views may have been rendered in part for political reasons: The Schlesinger approach is favored by many American conservatives on whom Mr. Nixon's political future may well depend. If this is so, it would be a strange twist for a man who wrote, before joining the Nixon administration, that politics is "the art of calculated cheating" and that politicians care not for the substance but just for the "symbolism of concern."

It is tempting but misleading to put James Schlesinger down as nothing but a sophisticated hawk. He is a far more serious and sobering figure than that, and especially to those of us who had hoped that the end of the active American part in the Vietnam war had removed the last large major obstacle to Soviet-American accommodation. Such people had not figured adequately on how the arrival of strategic and political "parity" might unsettle both countries, kindling in the Kremlin a certain inclination to probe and test the new horizons of Soviet power and stirring in the United States doubts about whether we can accept actually the diminished power position we now concede rhetorically.

The basic riddle which detente poses to Americans and Russians is whether the two nations can live in reasonably good temper with a global situation marked by an inescapable messiness and uncertainty. Whether Schlesinger can is not clear. But the rest of us, if we are to be honest, must ask ourselves if we can, either.



The stability school would make nuclear war unthinkable by ruling out the notion that any kind of Soviet strike—large or small, on us or on an ally—would be met by less than a total American response. But the credibility school holds that not the size but the certainty of a nuclear response is what actually would deter a Soviet strike or political probe, and that the threat of a total response to a limited strike is simply not credible. This in outline is Washington's new "great debate." It goes to psychological states and is therefore unresolvable in logical terms.

Intellectually, Kissinger has seemed to be on Schlesinger's side, although increasingly the Secretary of State has seemed troubled that the pursuit of "credibility" supplies an open-ended rationale for further mutual arms-building. Also on Schlesinger's side are Fred C. Ikle, an old Rand colleague who as head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency has blunted that agency's former role as an in-house SALT dove; and Sen. Jackson, who shares his gnawing anxiety that American irresolution might tempt the Russians to try to go strategically one up. On the other or "stability" side—the losing side—are only the few liberal arms-control advocates in the Congress and elsewhere.

### The Retargeting Flap

SCHLESINGER has made two major strategic moves. The first was to announce that some Soviet military forces, as well as Soviet cities, were now being targeted by our missiles.

This has always been so, if only because the number of American warheads, which is in the tens of thousands, so far surpasses the number of Soviet cities. By *declaring* such a change, however, Schlesinger meant to plug a gap that has troubled strategic thinkers at least since Kissinger limned it almost 20 years ago. Schlesinger meant to warn the Kremlin, and to assure our allies, that if the Russians struck us or an ally with something less than a full strike, then the Ameri-

can President would not be torn between replying massively against cities (in which case he would know that American cities, too, would be destroyed) or replying on so slight a scale that a foe anticipating it would not be deterred.

To its advocates, the idea of a limited strike against Soviet military targets ("counterforce") spares the President the impossible choice of "suicide or surrender" and offers him politically useful strategic "options." The advocates note, too, that Soviet sub-launched missiles, like our own, are invulnerable and will remain so indefinitely; this obviates either side's fear that its whole deterrent could be taken out in a first strike.

To its critics—and Schlesinger's re-targeting declaration aroused them all—the idea of counterforce not only makes nuclear war more thinkable, by implying that a nuclear war exchange can be confined safely to military targets, but scares the adversary into thinking that maybe his principal deterrent, the land-based missiles, will be nullified by a first strike. But by regularly reminding the public that the "very adventuresome" Russians could be planning on a counterforce capability of their own (albeit eight to ten years hence), Schlesinger has made his retargeting pronouncement stick.

### Warheads and SALT

SCHLESINGER'S second major move was to put into his new budget funds for research and development (short of production and deployment) of a range of new strategic projects, including more accurate