

Schlesinger-Kissinger Schism

By George C. Wilson

An intimate of James R. Schlesinger said yesterday that the fired Defense Secretary delivered "an unintentional valedictory" when he declared last week that "some years from now somebody will raise the question: 'Why were we not warned?' And I want to be able to say, 'Indeed, you were.'"

Schlesinger's warnings about the Soviet military buildup have become so strident of late that they have upset many officials in the Ford administration—including the President and Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger.

But Schlesinger fervently believes his warnings about the dangers in letting Soviet military budgets increase while American ones were trimmed.

Defense officials said the size of the Pentagon's fiscal 1977 budget—the one to be presented to the voters in election year 1976—was the main topic of conversation between the President and Schlesinger in a White House meeting Saturday morning.

Schlesinger argued for making the Pentagon's fiscal 1976 request for \$97.8 billion (in now obligatory authority) the base figure for making reductions in the next

year's Pentagon budget. But Mr. Ford said the office of Management and Budget wanted the base to be the total that Congress decides to appropriate—a considerably lower figure. Schlesinger left the White House after declaring he might not be able to support such a budget, defense officials said. On Sunday morning Schlesinger was fired.

In addition to his arguments on how much is enough to safeguard the United States, Schlesinger has had fundamental differences with Kissinger—differences that gave Mr. Ford additional incentive to get a new Secretary of Defense.

Kissinger has sold President Ford on the advantages of doing business with the Russians across a broad front—the policy of detente.

Mr. Ford, in turn, has been telling the American people that detente is good for them. His deals with the Russians under the heading of detente—such as selling them grain—have not always gone down well with the voters, however.

But on top of these protests outside the government about the administration's dealings with the Soviet Union has come a steady drumbeat of warnings about the Russians from Schlesinger—a member of Mr. Ford's own team. Schlesinger's tough talk about

the Soviet military sometimes sounds like the rhetoric used by Ronald Reagan, considered by the White House to be Mr. Ford's most powerful challenger for the presidency.

On Oct. 20, for example, Schlesinger opened a Pentagon news conference with a hard-hitting statement about the foolishness of the House Appropriations Committee—headed by President Ford's old friend, George H. Mahon (D-Tex.)—in cutting the Pentagon budget by \$7.6 billion.

He warned in the same news conference that the Soviet Union is spending as much as 50 per cent more on missiles, planes and other weapons than the United States.

Such harsh talk about the Russians came at the very moment Kissinger was trying to negotiate a new strategic arms limitation agreement (SALT).

Schlesinger argued that the United States should not rush into a new SALT agreement—that it might be better to wait until after the 1976 election than risk giving in to the Russians on such issues as whether or not to count the Soviet Backfire bomber as a strategic weapon.

To win congressional approval of an arms agreement, it is considered essential to have the advance endorsement of it by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Schlesinger's expressed fears about the Soviet arms buildup could not help but make it more difficult for President Ford and Kissinger to get an endorsement from the Joint Chiefs.

In a small example of his

broke the Ford administration's boycott of the AFL-CIO dinner on June 30 for Alexander Solzhenitsyn by attending. Some observers felt that Schlesinger's attendance was a silent but public dissent on going so far with detente—a Kissinger policy that Solzhenitsyn assailed at the dinner.

Schlesinger also announced through his press secretary, Joseph Laitin, that he had been cut out of Kissinger's latest negotiations to get a Mideast agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

Not only did Laitin and later Schlesinger himself confirm the Pentagon's exclusion from those negotiations, but the Defense Secretary publicly questioned the wisdom of giving Israel the Pershing, a missile which has a range of about 460 miles.

Kissinger, in one of the documents negotiated with the Israelis, had promised to look favorably on an Israeli request for the Pershing, which is designed to carry a nuclear warhead. Israel promised to put conventional explosives in its Pershings if it got the missile.

Another possible area of difference between Schlesinger and Kissinger, although this has not surfaced to date, is what to tell the congressional committees investigating the CIA—an agency Schlesinger directed for four months before becoming Secretary of Defense on July 2, 1973.

Schlesinger has said his differences with Kissinger have been overblown in the press—'much exaggerated'

Deep

Kissinger have monumental egos.

Schlesinger frequently complained privately that Kissinger did not understand the consequences to long-range military policy of yielding bargaining chips—like the long-range cruise missile Schlesinger wants the United States to build. He decried Kissinger's tendency to make concessions in the military area to gain momentary, tactical advantage.

Schlesinger said recently that "the policy maker, if he disagrees with policy in a serious way, should depart."