

Original citation:

Moran, Christopher R. (2017) Nixon's axe man : CIA director James R. Schlesinger. Journal of American Studies.

Permanent WRAP URL:

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/87325>

Copyright and reuse:

The Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP) makes this work by researchers of the University of Warwick available open access under the following conditions. Copyright © and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable the material made available in WRAP has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

Publisher's statement:

This article has been published in a revised form in Journal of American Studies. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S002187581700086> . This version is free to view and download for private research and study only. Not for re-distribution, re-sale or use in derivative works. © Cambridge University Press and British Association for American Studies 2017.

A note on versions:

The version presented here may differ from the published version or, version of record, if you wish to cite this item you are advised to consult the publisher's version. Please see the 'permanent WRAP URL' above for details on accessing the published version and note that access may require a subscription

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: wrap@warwick.ac.uk

NIXON'S AXE MAN: CIA DIRECTOR JAMES R. SCHLESINGERⁱ

*'The...months Schlesinger was at CIA were a bad time. Senior officials went from a DCI [Richard Helms] who was one of them, understood the heart and soul of intelligence, and was a gentleman of the old school, to a DCI who had a mandate from Nixon to shake things up.'*ⁱⁱ

Robert Gates, CIA Director (1991 to 1993).

In his memoir, *The Night Watch*, David Atlee Phillips, a former chief of Latin American operations for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), revealed that he had polled a host of retired colleagues on how they rated the various directors of the CIA from Allen Dulles (1953-1961) to William Colby (1973-1976). To gauge their feelings on the matter, he asked two questions. One: 'If I were shipwrecked on a desert island, a pleasant one with abundant food, good climate, a supply of scotch and every hope a ship would pass by, I would choose to be with...?' And two: 'If I were to be shipwrecked on a terrible desert island, with little food and amenities, with scant hope for survival and I wanted to escape badly, I would choose to be with...?'ⁱⁱⁱ

When it came to the first question, Dulles won hands down. Respondents remarked how pleasant it would be to be stranded with the genial spymaster, a raconteur known for his skill and wit in spinning a yarn. Respondents also believed that Dulles would devise a plan to get everyone off the island, although he himself would refrain from getting his hands dirty, assuming the role of 'supervisor' rather

than 'doer'. When it came to the second question, Richard Helms (1966-1973) came top. Like Dulles, Helms was a charming conversationalist, but he also possessed a steely determination to get things done. Honourable mentions also went to John McCone (1961-65) and William "Red" Raborn (1965-66), with one respondent commenting that McCone, a former ship-builder, would build a boat out of seaweed. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Colby divided opinion: while some believed that he had kept the Agency from destroying itself, or from being destroyed by outsiders, by taking the controversial decision to reveal some of the CIA's darkest secrets to Congress, others could not forgive him for his candidness on the witness table.

There was one Director no one wanted to be abandoned with: James Rodney Schlesinger. Indeed, Phillips explained that he did not even ask his colleagues for their opinion of Schlesinger, knowing that the answer would be universally negative. The author Brian Freemantle has written that, "The degree of hatred engendered by Schlesinger was astounding".^{iv} CIA veterans refer to his directorship as a 'reign of terror'.^v Phillips claimed that Schlesinger 'left behind a CIA seething with resentment and rancor'.^{vi} His unpopularity amongst staff was such that the Agency's Office of Security had to provide him with extra bodyguards, to escort him to and from headquarters in Langley, Virginia. Bulletin boards were replete with unflattering caricatures. Reportedly, a special closed circuit television camera was installed opposite his official portrait because of fears that it would be vandalised by disgruntled employees.^{vii}

The level of animosity shown towards Schlesinger is fairly remarkable when we consider that he was in the job for barely six months. He was nominated by President Richard Nixon on 21 December 1972. His appointment was confirmed by the Senate on 23 January 1973, and he was officially sworn in as the Agency's ninth Director on 2 February 1973. At the age of 43, he was the youngest person ever to occupy the position. By the summer, however, he was gone. On 2 July, he became Secretary of Defense.

Our understanding of why Schlesinger was so disliked is presently insufficient. Also inadequate is our understanding of the implications of this unpopularity.^{viii} Unlike other directors, including Dulles, Colby, Helms, George Tenet (1996-2004), and most recently Leon Panetta (2009-2011), Schlesinger has not written a memoir.^{ix} Nor has anyone written a biography of him. With some justification, authors have been more preoccupied with his predecessor Helms and his successor Colby, two of the great Cold War spymasters.^x The few words that have been written about Schlesinger in larger histories of the CIA attribute much of the animosity to some painful personnel reductions and, above all, his directive to staff, on 9 May, requiring them to report to him all activities going on, or in the past, which might be interpreted as being outside of the CIA's legislative charter. As a result of this sweeping edict, the "Family Jewels" were born – a 693-page report of abuses which, when leaked in late 1974, led inexorably to a year of unprecedented public and congressional scrutiny of the CIA and brought about a new era of oversight for US intelligence.^{xi} According to Freemantle, Schlesinger

was loathed for priming ‘probably the biggest bombshell ever to explode’ in CIA history.^{xii}

This article will revisit Schlesinger’s period as CIA Director and, by extension, his time as Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), responsible for coordinating national collection and analysis, and claim that the negative feelings about him went far deeper than has been suggested. Drawing on interviews with retired intelligence officers; spy memoirs; newly declassified records from the CIA’s CREST database; plus some materials from Schlesinger’s private collection, which has been weeded, redacted, and recently opened for public inspection at the Library of Congress; it will be argued that Schlesinger was disliked because he challenged the *culture* of the CIA, with important consequences for the Agency and its workforce.

Culture is, of course, is a slippery term; trying to define it has been likened to capturing air. It nevertheless holds enormous value for anyone seeking to understand the basic assumptions, values, beliefs, customs, procedures and behaviors of social groups. Since its creation in 1947, the CIA had developed its own unique culture – one it believed was well-suited to the job of producing accurate and actionable intelligence to policymakers. This culture dictated that, while the CIA existed to serve Presidents, it had to keep its distance to ensure that it was not susceptible to manipulation in support of political goals. It prioritised the role of humans, working overseas as clandestine agents, above technical methods of collection. It held secrecy to be absolutely sacred. It favoured reform

from within, not from outside, rendering it analogous to what the French sociologist of culture Pierre Bourdieu calls a 'habitus'. Bourdieu has taught us that a habitus is open to modification and reconstruction, but typically through reflexive agency rather than through encounters with outside forces; external interference threatens the habitual actions that are intuitively performed by members of the group and thus threaten the culture. The culture of the CIA also hinged on a daring 'can do' spirit, perfectly encapsulated by William Baker, scientific adviser to five Presidents during the Cold War, who recollected in an interview in 1996 that the CIA would never flinch at 'jumping out of planes and so on'.^{xiii}

In what follows, it will be shown that Schlesinger's six months at CIA represented an iconoclastic attack on the Agency's culture. A firm disciplinarian, solid and self-assured, with a gruff disdain for the creature comforts of high office (he despised cocktail parties with a theological intensity), Schlesinger represented a radical departure from the 'band of brothers' style of leadership of previous CIA directors, Allen Dulles especially, famed for his 'ho-ho-ho' laugh that evoked the spirit of a college professor. An outsider, with no background in intelligence, he did not even want the job – it was just another stepping stone – but went in all guns blazing.

Fundamentally, Schlesinger was Nixon's 'axe man', a bulldozing political fixer. He did not subscribe to the notion that intelligence should be separated from policy or political issues, so as to ensure that agencies remain a source of unbiased

and unblemished assessment and not aggressive advocates of policy in their own right. His feeling was that the CIA operated in a self-protected bubble, which had grown isolated in suburbia and too remote from those who make policy. His objective: to make the CIA a service organization of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. If this meant intelligence being mixed up in partisan matters, then so be it. As Helms remarked in his memoirs, Schlesinger had orders to ‘make the Agency a more responsive element of the Nixon administration’.^{xiv} On his watch, CIA officers were told to get with the president’s program or get out – literally, as well as figuratively. True to Nixon’s wishes, he instituted far-reaching bureaucratic changes, including redundancies and retirements, ostensibly as part of an economy drive to make the CIA more efficient, but with a hidden agenda to clip the wings of the agency’s senior managers and render the CIA more in tune with the president’s agenda.

Targeting the existing culture, it will be suggested that Schlesinger wielded his axe particularly fearsomely in the direction of the old guard of the clandestine service, the prized undercover arm of the CIA that collected human intelligence (HUMINT) abroad and conducted covert operations. Secretive, insular, and full of buccanneering vigour, the clandestine service was the heartbeat of the agency, the holy of holies that had guided the agency’s thinking and behaviour through its formative years. Schlesinger, however, wanted to change this. In his opinion, it needed modernising: its ways were inefficient, out of step with the brute realities of the modern world, and had resulted in the feathering of nests and ‘blowback’.^{xv}

The ‘can do’ ethos, he held, was a myth that had led the CIA to take unnecessary risks in the realm of overseas covert action that had backfired, such as the Bay of Pigs fiasco in April 1961. The future of intelligence, he believed, would revolve around satellites, computers, and ultra-sophisticated military technologies – not spies playing games in the shadows.

For CIA employees, the consequences of Schlesinger’s top-down programme of change was something approaching what Yiannis Gabriel has described as ‘organizational miasma’.^{xvi} From Greek tragedy, miasma is a term used to denote a social group in the grip of turmoil or fear. According to Gabriel, miasma occurs in certain organisations that experience sudden and severe transformations, initiated by a single individual, typically the leader, and involving the loss of many valued members. Unlike other forms of organisational upheaval, it does not produce collective or successful resistance; staff are powerless to do anything in the face of the brutalisation. Confidence and self-worth are shattered: feelings of worthlessness, even guilt, become contagious, damaging motivation and efficiency. With *carte blanche* from Nixon to rattle people’s cages, Schlesinger caused miasma at CIA. His time at Langley saw a paralysis of resistance and the creation of a beleaguered workforce.

In the years leading up to his appointment as DCI in early 1973, Schlesinger had established himself within the Washington Beltway as an abrasive, formidably-intelligent, administration insider. Born in 1929 in New York City, he graduated from the exclusive Horace Mann School in the Bronx, before moving to Harvard, where he took a BA in 1950, a Master's in 1952 and a Doctorate in 1956, all in economics. At Harvard, he was a classmate and intellectual rival of Henry Kissinger, who later wrote that he considered Schlesinger 'at least my equal in intelligence', but even more egotistical: 'I conceded him pride of place in arrogance'^{xvii} After a spell as an Economics Professor at the University of Virginia, in 1963 he took a job at the Rand Corporation, a Californian think tank, where he rose to become Director of Strategic Studies. In 1969, he joined the newly-elected Nixon Administration as Assistant Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), where he earned a reputation as a budget-cutter and someone who was unafraid to make unpopular decisions with scant regard for what people thought of him. An avid birdwatcher in his spare time, he kept binoculars by his office window so that he could spy on the car park and reprimand staff who arrived late for work.^{xviii} His management style was no-nonsense and to the point. When an ill-advised Army colonel came to his office to give a presentation armed with charts, graphs and diagrams, he growled at him, 'Just cut out the Pentagon baloney and give me the damn facts'.^{xix} First in the office at 7am and invariably the

last to leave long after dark, he was nevertheless as tough on himself as he was on others.

At the OMB, Schlesinger became drawn into the President's private battle with the CIA. It is worth taking a moment to contextualise this. Nixon harbored deep-rooted suspicions about the Agency. As the son of a Los Angeles tram driver, who grew up in a house built from a kit with no electricity or running water, and who attended Whittier College because he did not have the money to take up a scholarship at Harvard, he had a chip on his shoulder about people who, unlike himself, had never had to struggle for anything in life. Populated by the descendants of wealthy families, expensive prep schools, Ivy League universities, and exclusive clubs, the CIA was precisely the old school tie bastion and vestige of the East Coast Establishment that he felt he had been fighting his whole life and which, he believed, opposed him politically. According to Alexander Butterfield, the presidential aide who famously revealed the existence of the White House taping system to the Senate Watergate Committee, Nixon possessed a pathological hatred of 'Langley liberals' – and would routinely be heard saying 'I'm gonna get those sons of bitches'.^{xx} Nixon held the CIA largely responsible for his narrow presidential election defeat to John F. Kennedy in 1960. In the campaign, Kennedy had relied heavily on a 'missile gap' between the US and the USSR to attack the Republican Eisenhower-Nixon administration as being soft on national security. In reality, there was no gap – or rather there was, but strongly in favour of the US. Insecure to the point of paranoia, Nixon clung to the theory that CIA officers –

instructed to brief the Democratic candidate – had deliberately withheld the knowledge that there was no gap, in a sinister scheme to secure his defeat at the polls.

After becoming President in January 1969, Nixon's opinion of the CIA went from bad to worse. At a critical time when he and his national security adviser Henry Kissinger commenced SALT negotiations with Moscow and formulated policy on US missile programmes, there was general dissatisfaction with the Agency's Soviet estimate, particularly related to strategic capabilities. As several authors have shown, there was an under-appreciation of Soviet ICBM production levels (SS-9s and SS-11s), plus confusion over the nature of the SS-9 re-entry system (was it a three warhead MRV or MIRV configuration?).^{xxi} Intelligence is not, of course, an exact science; but Nixon expected better, especially when estimates were supposed to be brightest star in the Agency's firmament. He and Kissinger were also displeased with the CIA's failure to warn of several important episodes. For example, in their view, the CIA was slow in detecting that the Soviets were planning to build a nuclear submarine base at Cienfuegos, Cuba.^{xxii} After the Agency had failed to warn Nixon of the overthrow of the Cambodian head of state, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, he barked to White House Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman 'Get rid of the clowns. What use are they? They've got 40,000 people over there reading newspapers', and made his point symbolically by returning to the CIA a thick package of Presidential Daily Briefs (PDB) unopened.^{xxiii} In December 1970, therefore, with reservations about the loyalty and competence of

the CIA, and with the overall goal of tightening CIA bondage to the White House, he asked Schlesinger to carry out a review of the intelligence community. As Thomas Powers has argued, far from being a routine paper exercise, with boxes simply being rearranged on an organization flowchart, the study was intended to produce real change.^{xxiv}

Career CIA officials resented the idea of a brash young interloper like Schlesinger meddling in their organisation. The review was interpreted as another attempt by Nixon to impose his political will on the Agency and limit their influence on policy. Earlier, the President had caused consternation by trying to introduce a procedure whereby Helms would be required to leave National Security Council (NSC) meetings after delivering the intelligence briefing.^{xxv} Controversially, Nixon had appointed Lieutenant General Robert E. Cushman, one of his former military aides, as Deputy Director of Central Intelligence (DDCI). According to John Ehrlichman, the president's assistant and White House special counsel, Nixon intended Cushman to be 'his man over there at the Agency', to 'keep track' of Helms, the personification of the Eastern Establishment he despised.^{xxvi}

Blandly entitled *A Review of the Intelligence Community*, Schlesinger's report of March 1971 was a damning indictment of the way the CIA went about its business, striking at the very heart of the established culture. It began by noting 'two disturbing phenomena': one, a 'spectacular' increase in the cost of intelligence; and two, a failure to achieve a 'commensurate improvement in the scope and overall

quantity of intelligence products'.^{xxvii} The total cost of intelligence, hidden by financial sleight of hand, was estimated to be at least twice the figure passed to Congress. The report went on to suggest that the intelligence community had responded haphazardly to the development of improved collection technologies such as satellite photography, telemetry, and electronic intelligence, which had blurred the once-clear lines between "national" and "tactical" intelligence. In this context, intelligence agencies had engaged in costly and duplicative missions. The report claimed that the DCI's theoretical command of the entire intelligence community was a fiction. In reality, given the wide deployment of resources, disparate and competing interests, and jurisdictional boundaries within the community, it suggested that the DCI failed to exert any meaningful control. Finally, the report considered the CIA 'claustrophobically insular' and backward-thinking on account of its unwillingness to recruit outside of narrowly-constituted networks.^{xxviii} Following in the footsteps of General "Wild Bill" Donovan's Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which had earned the nickname 'Oh So Social', the CIA had tended to fill the top jobs with Ivy League graduates and clubbable 'easterners', relying on informal ties with friendly college professors to spot the best talent. Colby later spoke in terms of the CIA taking 'the cream of the academic and social aristocracy'.^{xxix}

Nixon took the review extremely seriously. In a memorandum to members of the NSC, he emphasised that the need for an improved intelligence product and streamlining the nation's sprawling intelligence network was 'urgent', owing to the

growing relative strength of Soviet forces in areas where US superiority was previously unquestioned.^{xxx} Schlesinger's report made several recommendations, the most significant being the idea that the DCI should assume a greater leadership role over the intelligence community as a whole. Most DCIs had devoted the lionshare of their time and efforts to running the CIA, going about their community functions as an aside.^{xxxi} For example, Helms's calculation was that the best way to protect CIA interests was to steer clear of inter-agency disputes and avoid barking out orders to rival departments. In the words of Colby, he 'had far too exquisite a sense of political realities to get into a fight he knew couldn't win', and so refrained from adopting a dominant position in managing the community.^{xxxii} In contrast, Schlesinger argued that it was the job of the DCI to put the community first, not the CIA. As he saw it, the problems experienced by the community – from spiraling costs to poor analysis and slow responsiveness – were problems that stemmed from the lack of strong, central, leadership by the DCI. To correct this, he presented a range of options, from the suggestion of a new intelligence coordinator in the White House to the creation of a fully-fledged Director of National Intelligence (DNI) with the unambiguous authority to coordinate programs, prepare budgets, and control personnel across the community.

On 5 November 1971, Nixon issued a presidential directive on intelligence reorganization, infused with the language of austerity.^{xxxiii} Based largely on Schlesinger's report, it ordered the DCI to assume an 'enhanced leadership role',

albeit the directive did not call for the creation of a powerful DNI, which would have required new legislation from Congress. Specifically, the directive established the post of deputy to the DCI for 'Community Affairs', and gave the DCI an 'Intelligence Community Staff' to assist him in managing the Community's budgets, plans, and programs. It ordered the DCI to work with the OMB, every year, in preparing and submitting a consolidated intelligence budget. Spending cuts were the name of the game; to help, a new Intelligence Resources Advisory Committee was established, with the DCI as chairman, consisting of representatives from the State Department, Pentagon and the OMB. 'The need for some savings is urgent', the directive underlined.^{xxxiv} In a bid to ensure that the CIA got with the program, Nixon sent a separate note to Helms, a few days earlier, instructing him to 'give the role of community leadership your primary attention' and delegate, as much as possible, the day-to-day running of the CIA to the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence.^{xxxv} Rhetorically, the President gave Helms his full support, saying to him: 'If you have any trouble doing this, you let me know'.^{xxxvi}

Over the coming months, much to Nixon's dismay, there was little evidence of Helms putting the directive into effect. No concrete plans were drawn up on how to cut costs, whilst Helms had been reluctant to hand over the quotidian management of the CIA to the DDCI. By April 1972, NSC staff were complaining that Helms was 'proceeding very slowly and cautiously' in implementing Nixon's directive. Andrew Marshall, the resident NSC adviser on intelligence matters, wrote

to Kissinger and suggested that ‘We probably will have to put some pressure on Helms to get more rapid progress towards the President’s goals’.^{xxxvii} Marshall had his own negative feelings about the CIA. Earlier, he had written to Schlesinger, a close friend, saying that the ‘US needs a much better clandestine service than it has’.^{xxxviii} Marshall was particularly troubled by what he called the CIA’s ‘OSS ancestorship’, writing: ‘The action types inherited from OSS gave the organization, and recruiting, an action basis. They do not have the patience and talent to develop quieter intelligence gathering activities as they should’.^{xxxix} Acting on Marshall’s advice, Kissinger asked Helms to produce a six-month progress report, to be completed by no later than 5 May.

Helms, however, continued to drag his feet. In a letter to Kissinger, he wrote: ‘I see this as being an evolutionary process for quite a considerable period’.^{xl} Helms’s reluctance to make changes was born of several factors. One, the proposed reforms, with their emphasis on community management by the DCI, did not exactly excite him since he did not like to manage. As Douglas Garthoff has suggested, he ‘viewed his community role with a healthy dose of distaste, as a necessary and useful activity, but not something he embraced enthusiastically’.^{xli} Two, for all his rhetorical gusto about Helms having his unqualified backing, Nixon gave very little practical direction to his DCI, his attention being focused on extricating the United States from Vietnam without acknowledging defeat and conducting a successful re-election campaign.^{xlii} Helms alluded to this in a speech to a packed audience in the Agency’s auditorium – the “Bubble” – in June 1972:

‘One must recognize that in empowering me to take certain actions...I wasn’t given any strength to do them’. Moments later, he then said: ‘I want to withdraw that. I wasn’t ‘empowered’ to do anything. I was asked to do certain things’.^{xliii} Three, Helms suspected that the ultimate goal of the reforms was to increase White House control of the CIA. For example, ostensibly in a bid to facilitate a more fruitful conversation between intelligence professionals and the consumers of their product, Nixon had proposed a new National Intelligence Committee under the NSC – but with Kissinger, his chief *consigliere*, as chairman. Finally, as evidenced in and beyond his memoirs, Helms recognised that Nixon saw him as part of the problem, not the solution.^{xliv} As a result, he lacked the motivation to get behind the reforms.

Conveniently overlooking his own shortcomings, Nixon became increasingly agitated with his DCI’s failure to execute the Schlesinger plan. He had given an order, and he expected it to be carried out. The fact that Helms had done nothing only served to heighten his suspicion that the CIA was against him and his agenda. In an angry memorandum to Haldeman on 18 May 1972, he explained that the ‘problem’ with the CIA was twofold: one, that it possessed a ‘muscle-bound bureaucracy which has completely paralyzed its brain’; and two, that its personnel was ‘primarily Ivy League and the Georgetown set’.^{xlv} At the end of the year, with his re-election now confirmed, he wrote again to Haldeman to lament that ‘Schlesinger’s report of 2 years ago has not been implemented in any respect’.^{xlvi} By

this point, he had concluded that Helms had to go, and that Schlesinger should replace him.

Tough, hard-headed, and not one to suffer fools, Schlesinger had all the qualities Nixon required of someone who was expected to stir the pot at Langley. Moreover, as the official who had studied the CIA and made recommendations to reform it, he was seen as the obvious choice to engineer their smooth implementation.^{xlvii}

Schlesinger arrived under a cloud when he walked through the doors at Langley for the first time as Director on 2 February 1973. His reputation preceded him as the cocky outsider who, with only an academic grasp of intelligence, had had the audacity to tell the President that he wasn't getting good value for money from the CIA. In the hallways and around water-coolers, staff sneered when they learned that Colby had been asked to provide him with a reading list of instructive spy books, consisting of *The Craft of Intelligence* by Allen Dulles, *The Real CIA* by Lyman Kirkpatrick, *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy* by Sherman Kent, *The Invisible Government* by David Wise and Thomas Ross, and *The Double-Cross*

System by John Masterman.^{xlviii} Running a spy agency was surely no job for such a ‘Johnny-come-lately’.

There was a great deal of anger and confusion at the circumstances that had led to his appointment. The in-house perception was that Helms had been ‘kicked downstairs’ – to quote Atlee Phillips – by a spiteful Nixon in revenge for Helms’s refusal to implicate the CIA in the Watergate cover-up.^{xlix} In the days following the break-in of the Democratic Party HQ in Washington DC in June 1972, the President had brazenly asked his DCI to pay the bail money for the burglars and to halt the FBI’s investigation into the affair. Rightly, Helms had refused, but a short while later he was summoned to Camp David and fired (or, he was offered and accepted the ‘lesser’ job of Ambassador to Iran). CIA personnel were also bitter at the timing of the dismissal. Helms, who had been in the CIA for nearly three decades and was a hugely respected professional, was 6 weeks shy of the Agency’s automatic retirement age of 60 when Nixon informed him that he was being pushed out. The decent thing, therefore, would have been to let him retire gracefully after his birthday. Moreover, this would have raised fewer questions. Yet – ‘in a move of surpassing pettiness’ (Kissinger’s words) – Nixon insisted that the changeover occur right away.^l Mindful of the distaste this would cause, Schlesinger tried, but failed to persuade Nixon otherwise.^{li} Years later, in an interview, he said that ‘The administration’s intent was more or less to show the dominance of the president over the senior people in the administration, so they wanted me to move into the DCI slot immediately.’^{lii} Helms wrote in his memoirs that the speed of the

transition prevented him from arranging a proper ‘farewell session’ with colleagues. A few days after clearing out his desk, he allegedly confronted Haldeman and asked, ‘What happened to our understanding that my exit would be postponed for a few weeks?’ With a slight grin on his face, he replied, ‘Oh, I guess we forgot’.^{liii}

It did not take long for Schlesinger to start putting noses out of joint. In his memoir, *Honorable Men*, Colby recollected that Schlesinger came on strong, ‘his shirt tails flying, determined, with that bulldog, abrasive temperament of his, to implement [his] ideas’.^{liv} From the outset, he took steps to distance himself symbolically from the existing culture. Having steadfastly refused to meet Helms during the transition period, he proceeded to take possession of the Director’s suite and immediately ordered for a wall to be knocked down to enlarge his personal office space.^{lv} In an unmistakable repudiation of the old regime, he declined the opportunity to inherit the outgoing Director’s secretary, Elizabeth Dunlevy, asserting coldly: ‘I won’t be needing her’.^{lvi} In the same spirit, he pointedly renamed the title of the clandestine service wing of the CIA from the ‘Directorate of Plans’, which he considered a misleading euphemism, to the more straightforward ‘Directorate of Operations’ (DO). To signal that the CIA had for too long obsessed about secrecy, he erected green and white highway signs on the George Washington Memorial Parkway noting the exit for CIA headquarters. Amusingly, college students evidently thought they looked better in their dorm rooms, since no fewer than 9 signs went missing, some within hours of being erected.^{lvii}

It is hard to disagree with John Ranelagh's conclusion that Schlesinger was the Agency's first 'political director', with a mandate from the White House to make the CIA less of a rigid bureaucracy and more of a loyal presidential instrument.^{lviii} His first words to the CIA's senior management were, 'I'm here to make sure you don't screw Richard Nixon'.^{lix} In a speech to 300 senior officers on 5 March 1973, he emphasised on two occasions that it was the job of the CIA to serve the President, with Nixon specifically mentioned by name. (His notes for this speech have the words 'serve' and 'serving' underlined.)^{lx} At meetings, he sneeringly reminded staff that the 'CIA *is* part of the American government, you know'.^{lxi} Before relaying intelligence matters to the broader forum of the NSC, he would always report to Haldeman, the White House Chief of Staff, first. In doing so, Haldeman became something of a gatekeeper, filtering intelligence before it was put up for collective discussion.

As Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones has claimed, Schlesinger 'concentrated intelligence authority in his own hands in a way that the White House would be even more firmly in control of the informational bases of foreign policy'.^{lxii} In contrast to Helms, who, as discussed, was unwilling to exert his community role more forcefully for fear of enmeshing the CIA in bitter bureaucratic turf wars with rival departments, Schlesinger made every effort to be more than just a titular head of the intelligence community. He appointed himself Chairman of the Intelligence Resources Advisory Commission, with responsibility for the National Security Agency (NSA) and Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and formally designated

the DCI as the head of the intelligence community, thus giving himself extra flexibility as community-leader to assist the President politically. In a testimony prepared for Congress during his first month in office, he underlined: ‘I *do* plan to devote the greatest part of my time and energies to overseeing intelligence community affairs’.^{lxiii} To help facilitate this, he put into effect his earlier recommendation that the daily affairs of the CIA should be delegated as much as practically possible to the DDCI. On several occasions, DDCI Lt. General Vernon Walters was required to give speeches about the CIA whilst Schlesinger performed his community role, such as convening the United States Intelligence Board.^{lxiv} In short, community came first.

In a possible attempt to make the CIA more loyal to the president, he started a process of review that would eventually lead to the abolition of the CIA’s cherished Office of National Estimates, which coordinated the product of the wider intelligence community. The move had all the hallmarks of Kissinger. Kissinger had a low opinion of the Office’s assessments of world affairs, which were typically at odds with his own, and wanted estimators who were prepared to lay their judgements on the line, rather than ‘hedging’ to avoid ever being wholly right or wholly wrong. In his autobiography, *The White House Years*, he criticised what he perceived as the analytic caution and guarded judgments of the Office’s reports. His experience of the CIA was that, ‘Far from being the hawkish band of international adventurers so facilely portrayed by its critics, [it] usually erred on the side of the interpretation fashionable in the Washington Establishment’.^{lxv} ‘In my

experience’, he continued, ‘the CIA developed rationales for inaction much more frequently than daring thrusts’.^{lxvi} In June 1973, most likely in league with Kissinger, Schlesinger dismissed John Huizenga, then chairman of the Office’s overseeing board. The *Washington Post* commented wryly that Huizenga had paid the price for being ‘the bearer of unwelcome tidings’ to the administration; in other words, for not telling them what they wanted to hear.^{lxvii} Colby eventually abolished the Office in September 1973. In its place a new office was born whose job it was to write estimates to order for the NSC, rather produce them of its own volition, thus giving Kissinger and Nixon more control over what was being produced by CIA analysts.^{lxviii}

With his uncombed white-hair, rumpled tweed jacket, scrawny tie, pipe, and shirttail hanging out, Schlesinger had the look of a genial academic. Looks, however, can be deceiving; Schlesinger was a wolf in sheep’s clothing. Future CIA Director Robert Gates, a junior analyst on Soviet affairs during Schlesinger’s short but stormy directorship, has described him as ‘crude’, ‘demanding’, ‘arrogant’, and ‘dismissive of experience’.^{lxix} Another CIA man Peter Earnest, now Executive Director at the International Spy Museum, has called him a ‘hard ass’.^{lxx} Reflecting

on his career, Schlesinger later admitted that his blunt manner must have made him incredibly hard to work with.^{lxxi} On one occasion, after a meeting in which he had made a cutting remark about the President's negotiating skills, Nixon fumed: 'I don't want to see that guy in my office again'.^{lxxii} At CIA, his abrasiveness was apparent from the get go. During his first week, he infamously reproached an employee for taking an afternoon haircut at the onsite barber at Langley. When the stunned employee responded that he had grown half of his hair 'on company time', Schlesinger ordered the stylist to cut only 50 per cent of the man's hair!^{lxxiii} Such an encounter – while perhaps humorous in hindsight – was typical of the way that Schlesinger 'objectified' employees: reducing them to their work qualities, seeing them as things instead of people, and ultimately treating them with a lack of respect. Objectification of staff, argues Yiannis Gabriel, is a common characteristic of any organization intoxicated by miasma.

If there was one episode that typified Schlesinger's no-nonsense personality it was his instigation and management of a rolling program of 'slash-and-burn' personnel reductions, now known as the "Schlesinger Purge". There had long been talk in the Nixon White House of paring down the CIA's workforce – or, as Nixon liked to call it, 'cutting the CIA down to size'. On 25 November 1970, in a letter to Kissinger, Alexander Haig, one of Nixon's closest aides and later White House Chief of Staff, quoted the President as saying that he wanted a 'complete housecleaning over there [at CIA]' because they were not on his 'wavelength'.^{lxxiv} In July 1971, at a budget meeting, Nixon declared that the CIA 'isn't worth a damn'

and asked for a ‘25 per cent [reduction] across the board’, to ‘get rid of the disloyal types’.^{lxxv} Yet, as long as Helms was Director, downsizing had been impossible to achieve.

Schlesinger took to the task of making cuts with great gusto, firing or forcing into early retirement nearly 7% of the CIA’s total workforce, with the disproportionate share of the cuts falling on the clandestine side of the house. Former CIA Director Admiral Stansfield Turner (1977-81) estimated the number of terminations to be 630.^{lxxvi} Helms put the figure at 1,000.^{lxxvii} Ray Cline, one of the CIA’s top analysts on the Soviet Union, has suggested that it was nearer 2,000.^{lxxviii}

Schlesinger had needed no convincing to carry out the purge. He regarded the CIA as complacent, inefficient, and unwilling to keep with the times because, in his view, it was run by a bunch of like-minded old friends only interested in preserving their personal power base. His first words at Langley were, ‘This is a gentleman’s club, and I am no gentleman’.^{lxxix} In his memoirs, Colby remarked that Schlesinger felt there were ‘far too many “old boys” around the place doing little more than looking after each other, playing spy games and reliving the halcyon past of their OSS and early Cold War derring-do days’.^{lxxx}

Schlesinger had a particularly negative opinion of the clandestine service wing of the CIA, which he hit the hardest, considering it a ‘retirement home’ for aging veterans of the purported “golden age” of covert action in the 1950s, hopelessly out of touch with the intelligence requirements of the modern age. He

was highly sceptical of the ‘can do’ ethos that pervaded the DO and by extension the CIA as a whole, believing that this was a myth and a source of the agency’s woes. As he liked to remind staff, there had been little evidence of it at the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961, where some 1,300 CIA-trained Cuban exiles had been soundly defeated within hours of hitting the beach; lest staff forget, even attempts to make Castro’s beard fall out had failed. By living off imaginary past glories, he worried that the DO had too much influence not only within CIA, but also within government. Reportedly, he referred to it as ‘Helms’ Praetorian Guard’ and promised to ‘bust it up’.^{lxxxix} Unsurprisingly, when Nixon discovered that Schlesinger had made the deepest cuts in the DO, he was delighted. The DO was dominated by the haughty Ivy Leaguers who, in his view, gossiped about him at cocktail parties. In a short conversation with Kissinger on 23 February to celebrate the news, he described the DO as ‘over-staffed, over-aged, and unproductive’ before asking rhetorically ‘what the hell is it producing?’, which earned the response ‘very little’. ‘Some of these guys, Henry’, he continued, ‘go back to the OSS days. Anybody from the OSS is just too damn old. Don’t you think so?’, to which Kissinger replied ‘Oh, yeah, Oh, God yes’. Before ending the conversation, both agreed that Helms could never have pulled it off because (in Kissinger’s words) ‘that was his own service. These were all his boys’.^{lxxxii} A few days later, on 1 March, Haldeman told Schlesinger that ‘He [Nixon] is in full accord with your plans for personnel reductions and feels that you should definitely go ahead with the plans’.^{lxxxiii}

There was nothing inherently wrong with making cuts. The CIA had reached record staffing levels owing to the Agency's involvement in Southeast Asia, but with the signing of the Paris Peace Accords on 27 January 1973, bringing into effect a ceasefire, it made sense to reduce some of the so-called "Vietnam Bulge". Moreover, it was laudable for young blood to be given a chance, since opportunities for promotion had historically been limited by the abundance of aging officers in senior positions. It should be said that Schlesinger was not alone in thinking that the CIA – especially the DO – needed cutting. When Turner became Director in March 1977, he continued and accelerated the purge in what became known as the "Halloween Massacre". In his memoir, *Secrecy and Democracy* (1985), Turner painted a terrifying picture of an organisation almost beyond his control owing to the power of an entrenched and unethical old-boy network, especially within the clandestine division.^{lxxxiv} From day one, he found himself frustrated and hamstrung by independent fiefdoms within the Agency, chief among them the DO, which, he believed, obsessively guarded its turf and secrets from any interference – even from the director. Turner's Deputy, Frank Carlucci, likened the director's office to the command centre of a power plant – but with all the switches deactivated.^{lxxxv} As an aficionado of technical methods of collection – information gathered by satellites, computers, radar tracking, the bugging of conversations, etc – Turner worried that too many spooks operating in hermetically-sealed compartments encouraged unethical practices and could embroil the entire agency in a devastating scandal. Indeed, his memoir gave the

example of certain case officers, on the pretext of meeting their assets abroad, using their travel “expenses” to fund mistresses and private business meetings with arms dealers.

The Schlesinger purge might also be seen as an extension of a broader backlash occurring at the time against what Robert Dean has termed the “imperial brotherhood”.^{lxxxvi} In the early 1970s, serious questions were being asked about how American policymakers, despite their proclaimed rational pragmatism, could have committed the United States to such a long, bloody, and humiliating war in Vietnam. According to Dean, the answer for many people went beyond the imperatives of anti-communist ideology or any strategic calculations about the ‘national interest’. Just as important was the idea that the United States had been dragged into the conflict by the beliefs systems and ingrained habits of “Establishment Men” who dominated the national security state in the Cold War. As the products of all-male boarding schools, Ivy League fraternities and collegiate secret societies, metropolitan men’s clubs, and elite military units, such individuals, suggests Dean, were imbued with a tough-minded and self-assured ideology of upper-class masculinity, bound up with stoic ideals of competition, duty, and sacrifice, that encouraged the pursuit of aggressive intervention abroad to expand American power. Although further research is needed in this area, one can speculate that Schlesinger’s purge of the DO was part of a larger dissatisfaction brewing in American society with the culture of privileged male enclaves whose

apparent penchant for freewheeling and force had had such disastrous consequences.

What made the purge particularly controversial was the way Schlesinger went about the dismissals, later described by Turner as ‘unconscionable and lacking humanity’.^{lxxxvii} From the comfort of his office, he would inspect a list of officers and crudely announce, ‘He’s been here twenty years, that’s long enough, out’.^{lxxxviii} Ruthless in the extreme, the individual tasked with drawing up the list was also fired, unceremoniously told at the end of the process to ‘add his name to the list’!^{lxxxix} Dismissed employees were given a blunt two-paragraph letter stating, ‘It has been decided that your services are no longer needed’.^{xc} Some even received dismissal slips “COB” – close of business that day – denying them the opportunity for any sort of leaving ceremony. As Gabriel has argued, miasma thrives in organisations where there is downsizing without either separation rituals or psychological mourning.^{xcii} Men and women with years of experience were summarily fired without any flexibility, including officers only weeks from securing a higher pension. When the old hands accused Schlesinger of lacking compassion, he scoffed: ‘Don’t talk to me about compassion; the only compassion I’ve got is for the American taxpayer’.^{xciii} Instead of communicating to colleagues that he wanted to give the Agency a new sense of direction and purpose by affording younger people the headroom to advance, in the corridors at Langley he was repeatedly over-heard referring to the old-timers as ‘deadwood’, ‘dead meat’, and ‘misfits’ that had outlived their usefulness, a ghastly slur for individuals who had

served with devotion for many years. Some staff considered bringing a lawsuit to stop the massacre, but this came to nothing since everyone was aware of the strength of the mandate from the White House.^{xciii}

The purge was a direct assault on the culture of the CIA. Indeed, if Schlesinger had fired more in the analysis branch, the Directorate of Intelligence (DI), and less in the DO, it is possible that the reaction from the Agency would have been more restrained. The DO had a special place in CIA history. Many of its members – from the spies sent overseas to break the laws of other countries, to the planners and executors of covert action – were the stuff of CIA legend. In the words of one retired CIA operations officer, ‘the covert side is the *real* CIA’.^{xciv} Tom Polgar, a former CIA Station Chief in Saigon, has said that: ‘In my experience...there is no substitute for having your own reporting sources in the field who can tell you what is going on’.^{xcv}

The bulk of the individuals who were shown the door were the tough old soldiers, instilled with the outlook of the imperial brotherhood, who had been instrumental in forging the CIA’s operating principles. They included such heavyweights as Bronson Tweedy, Princeton class of 37, a former Vienna station chief and deputy director under Helms; Cord Meyer, Yale class of 43; and Thomas Karamessines, Columbia class of 38, who, as Deputy Director for Plans, had been actively involved in the CIA’s efforts to destabilize the government of President Salvadore Allende in Chile.^{xcvi} Historically, the DO’s instinct for self-preservation had been unbreakable. By decimating its ranks, Schlesinger was sending a clear

message: the day of the clandestine operator – a class of men with a predisposition for action, not analysis – was ending.^{xcvii} As he declared in a speech in the CIA's main auditorium, intelligence was 'going to be a 20 year career', populated by desk jockeys staring at computers.^{xcviii} His vision for the future foregrounded 'spies in the sky' – not humans.

The general consensus among CIA officers was that, while reform was probably overdue, firings such as these took away too much muscle along with the fat, leaving a void of experience. Previously top heavy with cold warriors, the CIA became bottom heavy with beginners. 'Some of those who left', Helms has written, 'took with them a store of language, operational skills, and area knowledge which, even with their possibly diminished energy, might usefully have been retained – if necessary by some contrived "on the shelf" arrangement'.^{xcix} Of course, given his background and affection for the DO in particular, one would expect Helms to say nothing less.

The abrupt sacking of these experienced pioneers was devastating to morale. According to Cline, confidence reached 'an all-time low'; certain people stopped turning up for work.^c While recognising that any organisation that suffered such a reduction in personnel might be demoralised, what made the cuts especially hurtful at CIA was the cruel methods of termination, plus the perception that the firings were designed to placate an insecure and manipulative President, rather than give the Agency new energy and relevance. As Robert Gates has suggested, rather than be excited by the prospect of new opportunities that might come their way, the

younger generation at CIA were horrified that so many talented people had been canned and began fearing for their own jobs.^{ci} In an environment where the feeling was that loyalty to the politics of Richard Nixon was valued more by the Director than professional expertise, people walked on egg shells: step out of line and they would be next. Moreover, some felt guilty for having survived when so many others had not. Although they had done nothing wrong, they were sensitive to a sense of fairness and were uncomfortable with the dismissals being ‘unfair’ in their favour.

Cord Meyer has written that morale is the CIA’s ‘most precious commodity’.^{cii} It boosts efficiency – a motivated workforce is a productive workforce – but also serves as ‘protection against penetration by the KGB’.^{ciii} Schlesinger’s purge, he has claimed, started to unravel the ‘fabric of mutual trust’ that had held the agency together as a disciplined organisation over many years. Similarly, Helms has written: ‘The bond between the CIA management and personnel – an essential element in the security of any intelligence agency – was seriously damaged’.^{civ} Suddenly, the CIA had to worry about those who had been fired taking their grievances and knowledge of the secret world to the press, which some of them did. Indeed, it has been claimed by some that the purge might have accelerated Nixon’s resignation by encouraging angry employees to leak to the press details of the President’s attempt to embroil the CIA in the Watergate cover-up.

At Langley, the umbrage caused by the purge was such that Schlesinger had to be accompanied by an increased security detail, on task to protect him from vexed underlings. For fear of being harangued or even physically assaulted, Schlesinger stopped visiting the Office of Technical Services (OTS), the CIA's real-life "Q-Branch" that provided gadgets and disguises to the clandestine services. When a visitor requested if he could have a tour of the OTS, Schlesinger replied: 'I can't take you through there. I don't think either one of us would emerge alive!'^{cv} That, however, was as far as the resistance went: the suffering and the savagery continued unabated.

In May 1973, barely three months after Schlesinger had arrived at Langley, Nixon announced his appointment as Elliot Richardson's successor as Secretary of Defense, starting on 2 July. Nixon needed someone who would be tough with both Congress, which, with the Vietnam War winding down, was looking to cut spending on nuclear and conventional arsenals, and Moscow, which had achieved virtual nuclear parity. Specifically, the President wanted Schlesinger to spearhead a flexible counterforce nuclear strategy, based around the idea of retaliatory strikes against meaningful Soviet military targets (such as ICBM installations), to limit the possibility of assured destruction. Some years later, Schlesinger recollected that

from this moment onwards his mind was focused almost exclusively on his new job, meaning that he devoted little energy to running the CIA and even less to managing the intelligence community as a whole.^{cv} However, this did not stop him from leaving a parting gift of enormous significance, and in doing so changing the course of CIA history.

By early May, the press was awash with stories linking the CIA with the unfolding Watergate scandal. Information surfaced suggesting that two of the Watergate burglars, E. Howard Hunt and James McCord (both ex-CIA employees), had received technical assistance from the Agency as they had carried out dirty tricks for the President. In testimony before a federal grand jury, Hunt revealed his role in the September 1971 break-in at the Los Angeles office of Dr. Lewis Fielding, the psychiatrist of Daniel Ellsberg, the defense analyst who had leaked the Pentagon Papers. Embarrassingly, Hunt testified that the CIA had supplied him with disguises and a camera.^{cvii} Schlesinger was dismayed by the revelations, considering them a violation of the CIA's charter, which prohibited domestic operations. Particularly vexing to him was the fact that he had learned about them not from his staff, but from the *Washington Post*. 'I didn't know what was going on', he later recalled, 'Because, you know, I would read about something in the morning in the papers and by the afternoon, I was being called up to the Hill to explain it'.^{cviii} In Schlesinger's eyes, the grubby affair was further proof that there was something rotten about the CIA's culture: too many cowboys, not enough thinkers.

Naturally, he wondered what other landmines existed under his feet. ‘What else have you been hiding from me?’, he quizzed Colby, then deputy director for operations.^{cxix} Schlesinger was particularly concerned about how many of these landmines might be known to the investigative journalist Seymour Hersh, having been told by one of his assistants, Angus Thuermer, that the reporter was ‘pussy-footing around on a big intelligence story’.^{cx} Colby, however, did not know. With this, Schlesinger threatened to tear the Agency apart – and ‘fire everyone if necessary’ – to determine if any more nasty surprises awaited him.^{cxii} The fact that Colby, a senior insider with thirty years of experience, could not tell him what the CIA had been doing was deeply troubling and was interpreted as yet more evidence of a failing culture. On 9 May, therefore, he issued a directive (drafted by Colby) to all CIA employees, from entry-level clerks to senior officers, commanding them to report immediately any activities, both in the past and ongoing, which might appear to be in violation of the agency’s legislative charter.^{cxiii} He also instructed Thuermer to give him a “rundown’ on what is known on Hersh’s efforts so far’.^{cxiiii} By the end of the month, Colby had collected a staggering 693 pages of possible infractions, spanning the CIA’s entire history. The list of abuses included plots to assassinate foreign leaders (for example, Cuba’s Fidel Castro and the Congo’s Patrice Lumumba); drug experimentation on unwitting American citizens; and a domestic surveillance program called Operation CHAOS, involving wiretaps, bugging, mail opening, and various ‘black bag’ jobs.^{cxiv}

At Langley, employees referred to the compilation of confessions as the “Family Jewels”.

As prize-winning journalist Tim Weiner has argued, Schlesinger’s order to staff to come clean about the CIA’s deepest secrets ‘violated every precept of a secret agency’.^{cxv} In short, it was an assault on the culture. Cord Meyer has claimed that certain colleagues used it as a ‘hunting license’ to dig up old records in a bid to find incriminating details about their superiors. Others, he continued, regarded it as an invitation to resurrect ‘old unhappy, far-off things, and battles long ago’ in an effort to prove ‘in the perspective of the present that they had been right in the dimly remembered past’.^{cxvi} “There are very few human institutions in the world”, Meyer has written, ‘from the American Civil Liberties Union to the Boy Scouts, that could survive in good working order so broad an injunction to confess all past improprieties or mistakes in judgement, least of all an intelligence agency whose job it is to operate outside the law in foreign countries’.^{cxvii} Interviewed some years later, Schlesinger suggested that it was never his intention to issue such a sweeping directive, saying that he ‘wasn’t really interested in unearthing things from the past’ and only wanted to know about possible CIA involvement with Watergate and the so-called ‘Plumbers’.^{cxviii}

The explosive ramifications of Schlesinger’s directive were not felt for another 18 months – long after Schlesinger himself had left the CIA and the blast zone, so to speak. After he had been nominated to succeed Schlesinger as DCI, Colby controversially handed the “Family Jewels” over to a few select members of

Congress, believing that in order for the Agency to move forward it needed to go through a period of self-catharsis. In keeping with their traditional 'hear-no-evil, see-no-evil' approach to intelligence matters, the committee chairmen kept the contents to themselves.^{cxix} However, in true Washington style, the "Family Jewels" were leaked. On 22 December 1974, Hersh broke the CHAOS story in a stunning front-page splash in *The New York Times*. On 28 February 1975, Daniel Schorr of CBS News spoke on air about assassination plots, claiming that the CIA might have literal skeletons in its closet. Two months later Helms, by most accounts a mild-mannered man, confronted Schorr and called him a 'son of a bitch' and a 'cocksucker' for revealing what he called 'the biggest secret of all'.^{cxx}

Amidst allegations that the CIA was spying at home, the inference being that it had become a Gestapo, Congress was compelled to investigate. By the time the season of enquiry was over, the CIA had been subject to the most intense public scrutiny of any intelligence agency in world history, ultimately leading to the creation of permanent select committees on intelligence. Described by one scholar as the 'most important example' of a 'Power Earthquake', dozens of intelligence officers were dragooned to the witness table, almost for public sport, and the secrets tumbled out.^{cxxi} In what came as a shock to many of his colleagues, who believed in giving only bare-bone answers to commissioners, Colby worked on the assumption that the Agency's survival depended on a policy of controlled co-operation, not secrecy and stonewalling, and opted therefore to accede as much as possible to their requests for sensitive information. Acolytes of Richard Helms,

who applauded him for perjuring himself rather than revealing secrets to investigators (hence his epithet ‘the man who kept the secrets’), were appalled. Among this crowd, Colby became arguably even more persona non grata than Schlesinger. James Angleton, the CIA’s fabled chief of counter-intelligence, even told friends that he wondered if Colby might be working for the ‘other side’.^{cxxii} Although the “Family Jewels” were to an extent a product of the very culture that Schlesinger had wanted to change, he later remarked that he was ‘mortified by the way things turned out’.^{cxxiii}

In conclusion, this article has tried to shine light on James Schlesinger’s tenure as CIA Director, the shortest of any DCI in history. Specifically, it has attempted to explain why this deceptively tweedy spy chief was so unpopular at the CIA, and consider the consequences for the Agency of the dislike toward him. Hitherto, we have been led to believe that the hatred stemmed largely from his decision to commission the “Family Jewels”, the notorious list of misdeeds that would leave the Agency mired in scandal. It has been shown, however, that the discontent went much deeper than this; anguish over the “Family Jewels” was more a symptom than a cause of the bad blood.

Fundamentally, Schlesinger was disliked because he looked to change the CIA's culture and habitual actions. Having made his mark in Washington as a tamer of bloated bureaucracies, he arrived at Langley as a usurper with a directive to strengthen the Executive Branch's grip on the CIA as a secret instrument of policy. The buccaneering clandestine operators who evoked the spirit of Wild Bill's OSS and had pride of place in CIA mythology were immediately targeted for extinction, to be replaced by a streamlined, younger, workforce less preoccupied with risky foreign adventures and increasingly reliant on technical rather than human methods of collection. Like Nixon, he believed that the CIA had grown complacent and inefficient under their influence. To borrow the phrase of organizational theorist Martin Parker, he regarded them as 'nostalgic ostriches' who refused to accept that the world had moved on from the perceived golden age of covert action in the early Cold War.^{cxxiv} The irony here, of course, is that while Schlesinger was trying to stamp out the freewheeling and unconstitutional behaviour of the CIA, across the beltway Nixon was carrying out his own campaign of unaccountable 'dirty tricks' from the White House, from bugging the phones of colleagues and journalists to burglarizing a psychiatrist's office to find files on a political opponent.

It is hard to escape the conclusion that Schlesinger failed as a spy chief. A good intelligence leader should be a centripetal force that brings people together and closer to a shared core. By contrast, Schlesinger was a centrifugal force that drove people away and crushed morale. Clearly, there is no easy or graceful way to

reform an organisation, whilst his goal of modernising the CIA and re-assessing its working practices was probably overdue. Indeed, the “Family Jewels” violations were, many would argue, the product of the very culture that Schlesinger was looking to overhaul. But, the hard-right rudder way he went about it was poorly conceived, causing waves of anxiety and discontent to wash over the workforce. Moreover, his failure to communicate properly the benefits of his reform agenda left many people fearing for their livelihood unless they accepted the President and his program without question. The dark side of Nixon – mean-spirited, sore loser, bad temper, vindictive, quick to take the bait and lash out – took corporeal form in Schlesinger. His heavy-handed approach, coupled with being perceived as Nixon’s attack dog, resulted in a state of miasma at CIA, characterised by a demoralised and unproductive staff, plus an absence of resistance. As some of his obituaries noted, no one ever doubted his brains; it was the manner in which he used them that stuck in the craw.^{cxxv}

ⁱ The research for this article was generously funded by the British Academy, under the auspices of a postdoctoral fellowship, plus the AHRC as part of the team project ‘Landscapes of Secrecy: The CIA and the Contested Record of US Foreign Policy, 1947-2001’. I am grateful to team members for their support, including Prof. Richard J. Aldrich, Prof. Matthew Jones, Dr. Paul McGarr, Dr. Kaeten Mistry, Dr. Zakia Shiraz, Dr. Andrew Hammond, and Dr. Simon Willmetts. I am also indebted to two anonymous peer reviewers, plus Dr. Paul Maddrell for organising a

panel on intelligence leadership at the 55th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association (ISA) in Toronto in March 2014.

ⁱⁱ Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 42.

ⁱⁱⁱ David Atlee Phillips, *The Night Watch* (London: Robert Hale, 1977), 279.

^{iv} Brian Freemantle, *CLA* (London: Rainbird, 1983), 58.

^v Anne Hessing Cahn, *Killing Detente: The Rights Attacks the CIA* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 83.

^{vi} Philips, *Night Watch*, 234.

^{vii} Freemantle, *CLA*, 58.

^{viii} There are, of course, many excellent histories of the CIA, but only a handful devote more than a few passing sentences to Schlesinger: Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *The CIA and American Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 190-2, 205, 218; Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *Cloak and Dollar: A History of American Secret Intelligence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 210, 212; Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *In Spies We Trust: The Story of Western Intelligence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Christopher Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency from Washington to Bush* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 388-89, 393, 396, 399, 402, 415; Scott Lucas, *Freedom's War: The US Crusade Against the Soviet Union, 1945-56* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Hugh Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); John Prados, *The Family Jewels: The CIA, Secrecy and Presidential Power* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), 10-18, 21, 49, 87, 92; Richard Immerman, *The Hidden Hand: A Brief History of the CIA* (Chicster: John Wiley & Sons, 20-14), 89, 94, 109, 192. Recent studies of the CIA have tended to focus on how the Agency has been represented by cultural products, including films, television shows, memoirs, and press articles. See: Tricia Jenkins, *The CIA in Hollywood: How the Agency Shapes Film and Television* (Austin,

TX: University of Texas Press, 2012); Richard J. Aldrich, “American Journalism and Landscapes of Secrecy,” *History* Volume 100, No 339 (April 2015), 189-209; Trevor McCrisken, “The Housewife, the Vigilante and the Cigarette-Smoking Man: The CIA and Television, 1975-2001,” *History* Volume 100, No 339 (April 2015), 293-310; Christopher Moran, *Company Confessions: Secrets, Memoirs and the CIA* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2016); Simon Willmetts, *In Secrecy’s Shadow: The OSS and CIA in Hollywood Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

^{ix} Allen Dulles, *The Craft of Intelligence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963); William Colby and Peter Forbath, *Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978); Richard Helms, *A Look Over My Shoulder: A Life in the Central Intelligence Agency* (New York: Random House, 2003); George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007); Leon Panetta, *Worthy Fights: A Memoir of Leadership in War and Peace* (New York: Penguin, 2014).

^x There have been several major studies of Dulles, Helms and Colby, including Peter Grose, *Gentleman Spy: The Life of Allen Dulles* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994); James Srodes, *Allen Dulles: Master of Spies* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 1999); Stephen Kinzer, *John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles, and Their Secret World War* (New York: Henry Holt, 2013); Thomas Powers, *The Man Who Kept the Secrets: Richard Helms and the CIA* (New York: Knopf, 1979); John Prados, *Lost Crusader: The Secret Wars of CIA Director William Colby* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Randall Woods, *Shadow Warrior: William Egan Colby and the CIA* (New York: Basic Books, 2013).

^{xi} Prados, *The Family Jewels*.

^{xii} Freemantle, *CLA*, 58.

^{xiii} “Interview of Dr. William O. Baker by R. Cargill Hall at Bell Laboratory on 7 May 1996,” Niels Bohr Library and Archives, American Institute of Physics, College Park, MD USA.

^{xiv} Helms, *Look Over My Shoulder*, 423.

^{xv} Some of the conceptual inspiration for this article, especially in relation to organisational culture and change, came from: Martin Parker, “University, Ltd: Changing a Business School,”

Organization Volume 21, No 4 (March 2014), 281-292; Martin Parker, *Organizational Culture and Identity* (London: Sage, 2000).

^{xvi} Yiannis Gabriel, "Organizations in a State of Darkness: Toward a Theory of Organizational Miasma," *Organization Studies* Volume 33 (2012), 1137-1152.

^{xvii} Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Reprint Edition, 2011), 1155.

^{xviii} Interview with ex-CIA official.

^{xix} "Pentagon Expecting Shock," *The Ledger*, 12 May 1973.

^{xx} Interview with Alexander Butterfield.

^{xxi} John Prados, *The Soviet Estimate: U.S. Intelligence and Soviet Strategic Forces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); Lawrence Freedman, *United States Intelligence and the Soviet Strategic Threat* (London: Macmillan, 1986); Raymond Garthoff, *A Journey Through the Cold War: A Memoir of Containment and Coexistence* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2001).

^{xxii} Garthoff, *Journey*, 280.

^{xxiii} Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (London: Penguin, 2007), 374.

^{xxiv} Thomas Powers, *The Man Who Kept the Secrets: Richard Helms and the CIA* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1979), 207.

^{xxv} Douglas F. Garthoff, *Directors of Central Intelligence as Leaders of the U.S. Intelligence Community, 1946-2005* (Washington DC: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2005), 64.

^{xxvi} Ehrlichman cited in Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only*, 353.

^{xxvii} James Schlesinger, "A Review of the Intelligence Community," 10 March 1971, The National Security Archive, George Washington University, DC, USA.

^{xxviii} Powers, *Helms*, 207.

^{xxxix} Colby, *Honorable Men*, 180.

^{xxx} Richard Nixon, “Organization and Management of the US Foreign Intelligence Community,” 5 November 1971, CIA Records Search Tool (hereafter CREST), National Archives II (hereafter NARA), College Park, MD, USA.

^{xxxix} See David Robarge, “Leadership in an Intelligence Organization: The Directors of Central Intelligence and the CIA,” in *The Oxford Handbook of National Security Intelligence*, ed. Loch Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 485-504.

^{xxxii} Colby, *Honourable Men*, 330.

^{xxxiii} For a more detailed assessment of the Schlesinger Report, its origins and implementation, see Michael Warner, “Reading the Riot Act: The Schlesinger Report, 1971,” *Intelligence and National Security* Volume 24, No 3 (2009), 387-417.

^{xxxiv} Richard Nixon, “Organization and Management of the US Foreign Intelligence Community,” 5 November 1971, CREST, NARA.

^{xxxv} Richard Nixon to Richard Helms, 1 November 1971, Document 240 in Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-76, Volume II, Organization and Management of US Foreign Policy, 1969-72*, p. 537. Cited hereafter as *FRUS, 1969-72*; Warner, “Schlesinger Report”, 411.

^{xxxvi} Powers, *Helms*, 207.

^{xxxvii} Andrew Marshall to Henry Kissinger, 13 April 1972, *FRUS, 1969-1976*, 608-612; Warner, “Schlesinger Report”, 413.

^{xxxviii} Andrew Marshall to James Schlesinger, 10 September 1969, James Schlesinger Papers (hereafter JSP), MSS 84843, Box 31, Folder 2, Library of Congress (hereafter LoC), Washington DC.

^{xxxix} *Ibid.*

^{xl} Richard Helms to Henry Kissinger, 4 May 1972, *FRUS, 1969-72*, 615-18.

^{xli} Garthoff, *Directors of Central Intelligence as Leaders of the U.S. Intelligence Community*, 75.

^{xlii} Warner, “Schlesinger Report”, 413.

^{xliii} Garthoff, *Directors of Central Intelligence as Leaders of the U.S. Intelligence Community*, 74.

^{xliv} Helms, *Look Over My Shoulder*, esp. Chapter 36. See also: Christopher Moran, “From Confession to Corporate Memory: The Memoirs of Former CIA Director Richard M. Helms,” *International History Review* Volume 36, No 1 (2014), 70-88; Ray Locker, *Nixon’s Gamble: How a President’s Own Secret Government Destroyed His Administration* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 139-40; Richard H. Immerman, “The Politics of Intelligence Reform,” in Jeffery A. Jenkins & Sidney M. Milkis, eds, *The Politics of Major Policy Reform in Postwar America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 238.

^{xlv} Richard Nixon to Bob Haldeman, 18 May 1972, *FRUS, 1969-72*, 620-1; Warner, “Schlesinger Report”, 414.

^{xlvi} Richard Nixon to Bob Haldeman, 27 December 1972, *FRUS, 1969-72*, 658; Warner, “Schlesinger Report”, 415.

^{xlvii} Warner, “Schlesinger Report”, 414-15.

^{xlviii} William Colby to James Schlesinger, 2 January 1973, JSP, Box 10, Folder 9, LoC.

^{xlix} Phillips, *Night Watch*, 233.

^l Henry Kissinger, Foreword to *Look Over My Shoulder*, by Helms, x.

^{li} Cord Meyer, *Facing Reality: From World Federalism to the CIA* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 155.

^{lii} “James Schlesinger Interview Transcript. Interview with Timothy Naftali,” 10 December 2007, 2007-12-10-SCHL, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, CA, USA.

^{liii} Helms, *Look Over My Shoulder*, 412. This alleged exchange is also referenced by Joshua Rovner in his prize-winning book *Fixing the Facts: National Security and the Politics of Intelligence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 251.

^{liv} Colby, *Honourable Men*, 329.

^{lv} Meyer, *Night Watch*, 156.

^{lvi} Powers, *Helms*, 271.

^{lvii} Office of Public Affairs, “The Ups and Downs of CIA Roadsigns,” Unknown Date, CREST, NARA; Ronald Kessler, *Inside the CIA: Revealing the Secrets of the World’s Most Powerful Spy Agency* (New York: Pocket Books, 1992), 138.

^{lviii} John Ranelagh, *The Agency: The Rise and Decline of the CIA* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986), 548.

^{lix} Chalmers Johnson, *Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006), 93.

^{lx} “Speech Notes,” JSP, Box 42, Folder 7, LoC.

^{lxi} Gates, *From the Shadows*, 43.

^{lxii} Jeffreys-Jones, *The CIA and American Democracy*, 191-2.

^{lxiii} Garthoff, *Directors of Central Intelligence*, 80.

^{lxiv} *Ibid.*, 82.

^{lxv} Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Reprint Edition, 2011), 208.

^{lxvi} *Ibid.*

^{lxvii} Jeffreys-Jones, *CIA and American Democracy*, 192.

^{lxviii} Ray Cline, *Secrets, Spies and Scholars: Blueprint of the Essential CIA* (Washington, DC: Acropolis Books, 1976), 219.

^{lxix} Gates, *From the Shadows*, 42.

^{lxx} Interview with ex-CIA officer Peter Earnest.

^{lxxi} Thomas R. Smith, “James R. Schlesinger, CIA Chief and Cabinet Member Dies,” *Washington Post*, 27 March 2014.

^{lxxii} “Former Defense, Energy Secretary,” *Los Angeles Times*, 28 March 2014.

-
- ^{lxxiii} Interview with ex-CIA officer Peter Earnest.
- ^{lxxiv} Cited in Henry Kissinger to Richard Nixon, 30 November 1970, *FRUS, 1969-1976*, 467; Warner, “Schlesinger Report”, 398.
- ^{lxxv} Wayne Smith and Andrew Marshall to Alexander Haig, 30 July 1971, *FRUS, 1969-72*, 522; Warner, “Schlesinger Report”, 410.
- ^{lxxvi} Stansfield Turner, *Secrecy and Democracy: The CIA in Transition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985), 196.
- ^{lxxvii} Helms, *Look Over My Shoulder*, 425.
- ^{lxxviii} Cline, *Secrets, Spies and Scholars*, 219.
- ^{lxxix} Powers, *Helms*, 57.
- ^{lxxx} Colby, *Honourable Men*, 332.
- ^{lxxxi} Meyer, *Facing Reality*, 157; Powers, *Helms*, 278.
- ^{lxxxii} “Conversation between President Nixon and President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger),” Washington DC, 27 February 1973, 5:11-5:13pm, *FRUS, 1969-1976*, Volume XXXVIII, Part 2.
- ^{lxxxiii} Bob Haldeman to James Schlesinger, 1 March 1973, JSP, Box 40, Folder 11, LoC.
- ^{lxxxiv} See Turner, *Secrecy and Democracy*.
- ^{lxxxv} See James Bamford, “Stansfield Turner and the Secrets of the CIA,” *Washington Post*, 9 June 1985.
- ^{lxxxvi} Robert D. Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).
- ^{lxxxvii} Turner, *Secrecy and Democracy*, 198.
- ^{lxxxviii} Powers, *Helms*, 278.
- ^{lxxxix} Interview with ex-CIA officer Peter Earnest.

-
- ^{xc} Turner, *Secrecy and Democracy*, 198.
- ^{xcⁱ} Gabriel, “Organizations in a State of Darkness”, 1137.
- ^{xcⁱⁱ} Freemantle, *CLA*, 57.
- ^{xcⁱⁱⁱ} Powers, *Helms*, 278.
- ^{xc^{iv}} Kessler, *Inside the CIA*, 3.
- ^{xc^v} Ibid.
- ^{xc^{vi}} Robin Winks, *Cloak and Gown: Scholars in the Secret Ware* (New York: William Morrow, 1987), 432.
- ^{xc^{vii}} Ranelagh, *The Agency*, 549.
- ^{xc^{viii}} Cahn, *Killing Détente*, 77.
- ^{xc^{ix}} Helms, *Look Over My Shoulder*, 425.
- ^c Cline, *Secrets, Spies and Scholars*, 219.
- ^{ci} Gates, *From the Shadows*, 42.
- ^{ciⁱ} Meyer, *Facing Reality*, 158.
- ^{ciⁱⁱ} Ibid.
- ^{ci^v} Helms, *Look Over My Shoulder*, 425.
- ^{cv} Charles E. Lathrop, *The Literary Spy: The Ultimate Source for Quotations on Espionage and Intelligence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 113.
- ^{cvⁱ} Garthoff, *Directors of Central Intelligence*, 83; Warner, “Schlesinger Report”, 415.
- ^{cvⁱⁱ} Meyer, *Facing Reality*, 159.
- ^{cvⁱⁱⁱ} “James Schlesinger Interview Transcript. Interview with Timothy Naftali,” 10 December 2007, 2007-12-10-SCHL, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, CA, USA.
- ^{ci^x} Meyer, *Facing Reality*, 160.

^{cx} Angus Theurmer to James Schlesinger, 8 February 1973, JSP, Box 42, Folder 8, LoC.

^{cxⁱ} Colby, *Honorable Men*, 338

^{cxⁱⁱ} James Schlesinger, "Memorandum for all CIA Employees," 9 May 1973, CREST.

^{cxⁱⁱⁱ} Angus Theurmer to James Schlesinger, 8 February 1973, JSP, Box 42, Folder 8, LoC.

^{cx^{iv}} See Prados, *Family Jewels*.

^{cx^v} Tim Weiner, "William Colby, 76, Head of CIA in a Time of Upheaval," *The New York Times*, 7 May 1996.

^{cx^{vi}} Meyer, *Facing Reality*, 160.

^{cx^{vii}} Ibid.

^{cx^{viii}} "James Schlesinger Interview Transcript. Interview with Timothy Naftali," 10 December 2007, 2007-12-10-SCHL, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, CA, USA.

^{cx^{ix}} Kessler, *Inside the CIA*, 693.

^{cx^x} Powers, *Helms*, 293.

^{cx^{xi}} Jeffreys-Jones, *Cloak and Dollar*, 208.

^{cx^{xii}} Kathryn Olmsted, *Challenging the Secret Government: The Post-Watergate Investigations of the CIA and FBI* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 92.

^{cx^{xiii}} "James Schlesinger Interview Transcript. Interview with Timothy Naftali," 10 December 2007, 2007-12-10-SCHL, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, CA, USA.

^{cx^{xiv}} Parker, "University, Ltd", 291.

^{cx^{xv}} Rupert Cornwell, "James Schlesinger: Obituary," *Independent*, 27 March 2014.