

UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILD: ARTHUR SCHLESINGER

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Against any sort of competition, historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. would qualify easily as one of the world's most unattractive public personalities. Intellectualism and brilliance of mind can be admired when coupled with the personal charm and wit of an Adlai Stevenson, but in Schlesinger the same qualities seem only to provoke antagonism. On the eve of the last presidential election, a feeble attempt was made to portray Schlesinger as a regular fellow and one of the boys by picturing him on television in the melee of a campaign-sponsored discotheque party at one of the New York nightclubs. The pained expression he was able to muster could not have contributed much to the Johnson landslide.

It is interesting to find, now that he has bared all in the unassuming version of his historic role as a confidant and advisor of Kennedy, that many of his former associates among the New Frontiersmen, along with their news media sycophants, have been happy to join his critics in giving him a bum's rush to the oblivion of the stack rooms. Even his old Alma Mater would not have him back.

Schlesinger's troubles possibly stem from his early environment and lack of privilege as a child. One of our friends insists that he is at least partly responsible for the way Arthur turned out. Every time the neighborhood group of boys, all sons of Harvard professors, formed a club or planned a joint project, Schlesinger was pointedly left out. They considered him a pill and a tattletale. This failure in integration could have warped his whole outlook.

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