

ABM

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HEAD 'EM OFF AT "THE GAP"

That's the "megatonnage gap" reported last week by some of our most famous retired admirals and generals in a report on how U.S. nuclear power compares with the Soviet Union's. In the opinion of the brass-heavy American Security Council, we are on the short end of that gap.



Gen. Bernard Schriever

The report to the House Armed Services Committee was signed by former Air Force Gen. Bernard Schriever, who developed our intercontinental ballistic missiles.

It maintains that while we still lead in numbers of missiles and bombers, Soviet Russia has passed us in total wallop packed by their weapons. The gap could become "massive" by 1971.

Besides, ASC goes on, we have let the Communists steal the march on us in two other vital defense areas—development of anti-ballistic missile systems and nuclear weapons for space.

Despite hot denials from the Pentagon, the report is certain to prompt some sharp questioning from Congress. If on target, it is a boot in the pants for the—

POLICY OF "MUTUAL DETERRENCE"

—proclaimed and practiced by Secretary of Defense Robert Strange McNamara and the Johnson Administration.

This policy rests on the assumption that since the U. S. and the Soviets could incinerate one another in a nuclear war neither will pick a fight.

It holds true as long as both sides are willing to accept a nuclear stalemate. Gen. Schriever, et al., make it clear that the Kremlin has no such intention.

Russia built an ABM system while McNamara was pooh-pooing the idea and resisting all efforts by Congress and the defense chiefs to poke and prod him into action.

Talks Go Nowhere When we finally woke up, all President Johnson did was send an envoy tip-toeing off to Moscow to try to sweet-talk the Reds into a treaty to limit or eliminate ABM outfits. That got nowhere, and neither did LBJ at the Glassboro talkfest last month.

That shouldn't have surprised anyone. Two years ago we joined Russia in a pious United Nations agreement not to make space a war arena.

A few months later the Russkis boasted about their Scrag, an orbital vehicle that could lug a 30-megaton warhead through space. Our State Department clucked that that wasn't exactly cricket.

To which the Kremlin responded that we ought to look at the fine print in the contract. The treaty barred putting weapons in space—it didn't say anything about developing or producing weapons that could be used there.

So much for empty treaties with the Communists, who break or twist them at their own convenience.

We'd do better to put more effort into an effective ABM system and some of the super-sophisticated, futuristic space and earth weapons now reported on drawing boards. A bird in the sky is worth two in the Hollybush.

The price of losing this weapons race is brought sharply to mind by—

CAPTIVE NATIONS WEEK

—the observance of which began yesterday. It was decreed by Congress in 1959, lest we forget the slave empire the Communists have overrun in the past 50 years.

It is supposed to be accompanied by a ringing proclamation from our Chief Executive. But as our Washington columnist, Ted Lewis, pointed out recently, this has been toned down to almost a behind-the-hand whisper by successive Presidents.

Instead we talk of thaws, détones, rapprochements and building bridges to these tyrants who have sworn to bury us. With wishful thinking and weasel words we try to transform the Communist Ogre into a Jolly Red Giant.

Wishful Thinking Whenever we are tempted to take such pipe dreams seriously we should think of the millions of victims of our let's-get-along-with-the-Russians agreements at Yalta, Tehran and Potsdam.

We talk of "peaceful coexistence." What of their right to peaceful existence? And what the foundations for our "bridges" be the crushed spirits and broken hopes of those "huddled masses yearning to breathe free"?

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