in the magazines

Edgar M. Botome of the Boston University Department of Government examines the "Mythology of the A.B.M." in the October 20 issue of Commonweal, tracing some underlying themes (the "gap" cycle, for example) of previous debates about American defense policy and discussing some realities of the present situation.

He states at one point that "to assume that the Chinese would launch an attack on the unbelievable power of American nuclear forces is to assume complete irrationality on the part of Chinese leadership. If this irrationality is taken for granted by American leaders, then no amount of A.B.M. effort would prevent a Chinese attack. However, if we assume that the Chinese will use their power rationally, and avoid a direct confrontation with the United States (which they have done up to this time), then American offensive missile forces would deter any Chinese attack, with or without an A.B.M. system.

"The above notion of presumed rationality," Botome comments further, "deserves additional emphasis. The assumed rationality of national leaders in a nuclear age means that they will not commit national suicide, and it is upon this basis that the theory of nuclear deterrence functions. If this assumption is incorrect, then no amount of offensive or defensive preparation will be of any deterrent value to a nation facing a maniac who disregards the national consequences of launching a nuclear attack that can only result in the annihilation of both nations involved.

"Accordingly, it seems that the only reason for the deployment of even a limited A.B.M. system by either..."
side would be to destroy any 'accidental' missiles that happened to be launched by mistake. American and Soviet officials assure us that this type of error could not be made. Politically, the leaders of the United States or the Soviet Union are reluctant to explain the fact that both nations have created thermonuclear weapons systems which are subject to human or mechanical error. The fact remains that a mistake of this nature during a period of extreme international tension is one of the major ways in which all-out war could be initiated. Therefore, a case can be made for the deployment of a system designed to destroy this type of missile before it reaches its target. And, unfortunately, this particular point seems destined to remain on the periphery of the A.B.M. debate."

Theodore Sorensen, who served Presidents Kennedy and Johnson as Special Counsel, had not publicly expressed his views about American actions in Vietnam. Now he has "spoken out" in an article for the Saturday Review (October 21) in which he contends that "the strength, the morale, and the legitimacy of the present government in Saigon are at least sufficient now to permit our own country to pursue a different course."

"... even if Hanoi is not now ready to negotiate," Sorensen notes, "we can — instead of continuing the present treadmill into even more dangerous, divisive, and self-destructive escalation—prudently de-escalate our war effort without harming our interests and with some hope that Hanoi will de-escalate also. Limiting our military commitments, objectives, investments, and assaults, meanwhile consolidating our position in the most populous areas of the South, would cost us fewer lives, less money, no territory, and no 'face,' while better enabling us to wait until outside events—such as divisions in the Communist camp—make negotiations more possible. Certainly our present course is not dividing the Viet Cong from Hanoi or Hanoi from Peking, and indeed may end up helping to unite China for Mao or even Peking with Moscow.

"But in fact we do not know with any certainty whether Hanoi and the Viet Cong—together or separately—are now ready to negotiate. We have not stopped the bombing indefinitely to find out. We have not since one 37-day pause nearly two years ago accompanied our talk of negotiations with real deeds of de-escalation demonstrating our earnest good faith. We have not given to the pursuit of peace the same effort, ingenuity, and relentless consistency we have given to prosecuting the war. We have not prevented the Saigon regime from torpedoing the rise of civilian neutralist forces in the South capable of negotiating with the North and the National Liberation Front. We have not left those voices in Hanoi who might once have been concerned about their economy with much reason now to justify a cease-fire. We have not, to the best of my knowledge, adopted a concrete, mutually acceptable plan for negotiations—as distinguished from admirable but vague statements of principle—and communicated that plan to the North. Publicly, at least, we have not offered any of the concessions and compromises required by the military and practical situation for a realistic settlement, frequently implying instead only that we stand ready to negotiate the surrender of the Viet Cong.

"Most serious of all, we have not been sufficiently forthright or forthcoming in response to what may have been actual opportunities to start or explore negotiations. Perhaps we were looking for a different kind of 'signal' and missed the one they sent. Perhaps we were plagued by poor translations, poor communications, or poor coordination on both sides. But whatever the reasons and whoever is to blame—and assessing it now will not help—we must in the future take more care not to spur or ignore potential opportunities for negotiation. much less deny their existence or escalate in response to them."

Hanson Baldwin's "Vietnam Balance Sheet" in The Reporter for October 19 is a different reading of the indices of victory and defeat in Vietnam. He asserts that although "the Administration's war policies have made a long and costly war longer and more costly," it is "nonetheless ... abundantly clear, except perhaps to the opposition on the home front, that the war is not being lost." And, Baldwin maintains, "the course of the war even now can be shortened. The intensification of the bombing of the North since Senator Stennis opened his investigation of the campaign must continue, and all the important targets in the North—particularly supply and communications choke points must be paralyzed or isolated; ... more effective use of Vietnamese manpower and the reorganization of the South Vietnamese armed forces are essential to the winning of the war in the South where ultimately the war must be won. This may and probably will mean the addition of more United States manpower, perhaps beyond the 525,000 figure authorized by next June. But the 19 additional United States battalions—more than two divisions—that are scheduled to reinforce units now in Vietnam in the next nine or ten months could provide enough additional power if the South Vietnamese armed forces are more effectively used and if the interdiction campaign is intensified."

The Spring-Summer 1967 number of Peace, quarterly of The American Pax Association, provides full or capsule reviews of 74 "general peace books, books on Vietnam, anthologies, encycicals, and pamphlets." (Single issues, at $1.00, may be obtained by writing to the group at Box 139, Murray Hill, New York, N. Y. 10016.)

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