

IS CONGRESS IN THE WAR?

The House and Senate have yet to grapple with the stern tasks before the country. Poll-tax politicians who obstruct a victory policy. A survey by A. B. Magil.

ON MARCH 11 the House of Representatives summed up the case against itself: it voted, 331 to 46, to continue the Dies committee. The Dies vote synthesized a whole complex of political attitudes that threaten to convert Congress not merely into a forum of futility, but an obstacle to the successful waging of the most momentous war in our history. The Senate, it is true, has done nothing quite as scandalous as the Dies vote, yet its record since December 7 shines only feebly by comparison. The fact is we are trying to fight a desperate all-out war for survival with a Congress dominated by politics-as-usual, by petty feuding, sniping and obstructionism. It is like driving a car with the brakes on.

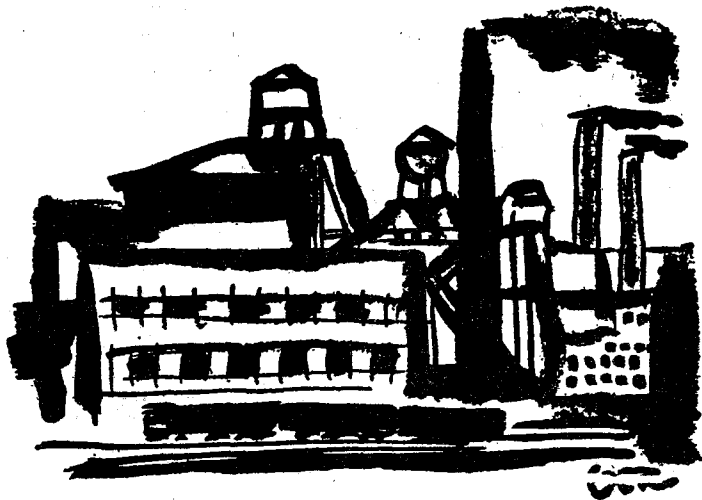
Consider the vote on Dies. The Texas congressman is something more than a zany, as Secretary of the Interior Ickes once called him. And he is more than a political Ponzi shamelessly goldbricking the country—though he is plenty of that. *The Dies committee is an auxiliary of the Axis.* It has shielded known fascists and politically disarmed the country by focusing attention on a false enemy: Communists and other progressives whose militant anti-fascism has been Dies' chief grievance against them. That is why Dies, as the Federal Communications Committee confirmed, is among the Americans most frequently quoted with approval by the Berlin radio. That is why he has received the accolades of the Nazi Bund, the Ku Klux Klan, the Silver Shirts, Father Coughlin, and assorted varieties of native fascists and anti-Semites. The issue is not whether the majority of the House oppose Communism—nobody doubts that they do. The issue is not whether they consider Dies a fraud or a man of integrity. The issue is whether they will act to strengthen national unity and help America win the war. For to vote for Dies and permit predatory lobbies to create discord on other issues is to pave with good intentions the road that may lead to an Axis-dominated world.

Undoubtedly, the great majority of the members of Congress want victory for this country. Besides the forty-six courageous men who voted against Dies, there are many others in both houses who merely require firm leadership and a more active expression of the popular desire in order to end the bickering and turn to constructive work. The fact is, nevertheless, that the record of Congress since December 7 has been appalling. Instead of rising to the occasion, sloughing off the old habits, and

becoming a powerful instrument for articulating and guiding the national will, Congress, after an interlude of about ten days, reverted to its usual self, a collection of jealous blocs rather than a unified parliament grappling with the stern tasks of war. Both houses have voted military and naval funds readily—as they did before December 7—as well as other direct war measures, but in the indispensable work of organizing the nation's economy and its civilian activity a great deal of time has been spent in throwing monkey wrenches into the machinery. This has not only deprived the country of the positive contribution it ought to expect from Congress, but it has compelled President Roosevelt, who should be devoting all his attention to the larger problems of strategy and leadership, to divert precious energy to Congressional maneuvers in order to prevent his program from being completely immobilized.

The appeasers have, of course, been eager to muddy whatever waters they could. But they have been aided and abetted by other reactionaries in both major parties who have not let the world struggle that will decide life or death for America stand in the way of their devotion to selfish minority interests. The action on price control is typical. Six months were consumed in wrangling and evasion while living costs mounted and the danger of inflation grew. Not till more than six weeks after Pearl Harbor was a bill finally passed. But in the name of keeping prices down it actually sought to guarantee a boost in the cost of the largest item in the family budget: food, though food prices had already risen about twenty percent since the fall of 1939. And it required considerable pressure on the part of the administration to eliminate provisions from the bill that would have made it even more objectionable.

Or consider the depredations of the "economy" bloc. For years these gentlemen have been sharpening their axes. Now with America at war, they see an opportunity to deliver the coup de grace to the New Deal social reforms on the plea that every penny must be spent on the weapons of war. And so, only a little over two weeks after the Japanese struck, Senator Byrd, the Virginia poll-tax's contribution to American statesmanship, urged Congress to engineer a domestic Pearl Harbor. In the report of his Committee on Non-Essential Expenditures he proposed to win the war by depriving millions of Americans of a large part of their stake in it. About \$1,750,000,000 were to be carved out of living standards (with an equivalent loss to morale) through the abolition of the Farm Security Administration, the Farm Tenant Program, the Civilian Conservation Corps, the drastic reduction of WPA and other schemes for impairing the all-decisive *human* factor in this war. Senator Byrd gave the cue to the wolf-pack that later mangled the cultural features of the OCD program, that voted down every proposal to aid the hundreds of thousands of workers thrown out of jobs by plant conversion, that now is assaulting the appropriations for the Farm Security Administration, soil conservation and the Farm Tenant Program. At the same time what is mistakenly known as the farm bloc, a group whose concern is only for the wealthy farmers, insists on assuring further exorbitant rises in food prices by prohibiting the government from selling its reserves of agricultural commodities below parity.



What has Congress done about the paramount problem of war production? In fairness it should be said that a real contribution to solving this problem has been made by two Congressional agencies, the Senate's Truman committee investigating the national defense program and the House's Tolan committee investigating defense labor migration. Both have spotlighted business-as-usual practices and have helped materially in making possible the progress that has been made in recent weeks. Yet this does not diminish the essential lack of interest and lack of leadership shown by Congress as a whole on the production front. It was not in Congress that the uprising against Knudsenism developed, nor did Congress lead the way in urging larger participation for labor in order to expand production. The fact is that the day after Donald Nelson made his recent broadcast proposing joint management-labor production committees and other measures to stimulate output, his proposals were not so much as mentioned on the floor of the House (the Senate was not in session that day).

At bottom the trouble is that this is a pre-war Congress elected in a different political situation and still thinking and acting in terms of yesterday. The roots of this Congress go back even further. The two years prior to the outbreak of World War II may be said to have marked a cumulative Munich at home, during which a reactionary bi-partisan coalition in Congress succeeded in frustrating the President's domestic program and blocking the policy of quarantining the aggressors that might have prevented war. In May 1938 the Dies committee was born; in February 1939 Congress defeated a proposal to fortify Guam. These two events, separated in time and apparently unrelated, had, nevertheless, a deep inner connection. They were expressions of the developing Munich mood, of that compound of appeasement and anti-democracy disguised as anti-Communism which proved fatal to more than one European nation. The retreat toward disaster manifested itself in the 1938 elections in the gains made by tory Republicans and anti-New Deal Democrats. This was the Congress which so greatly misread the portents of the times that it defeated all efforts to lift the arms embargo prior to the outbreak of hostilities. The Roosevelt administration itself was not entirely without blame. One recalls the Spanish embargo and other instances of appeasing the appeasers. And even today President Roosevelt fails to speak out against Dies and acknowledges the strength of the appeasement forces by keeping Earl Browder in jail.

The 1940 elections, held in the midst of war in Europe and Asia, brought no important change in the character of the dominant Congressional groups. This character is evident from the fact that on the eve of the Japanese attack and with the Nazi armies approaching Moscow, the bill to repeal the chief remaining provisions of the Neutrality Act scraped through in the House by the narrow margin of eighteen out of 406 votes and in the Senate by thirteen out of eighty-seven votes. The country was about to receive the impact of the Axis assault, but the blind men on Capitol Hill saw nothing.

It was during the debate on the Neutrality Act that southern members of the House put on their astonishing exhibition of attempted blackmail, threatening to vote against repeal unless the government got behind anti-strike legislation. Out of vengeful class hate they were ready to place the nation's security on the chopping-block. The behavior of these small-bore politicians served to highlight an important facet of the problem the country faces: the incompatibility of the poll-tax and of poll-tax congressmen—who exercise a disproportionate influence in Congress—with a victory policy.

One must ask whether even big business can afford the



Reactionaries—as usual

Smiths and Coxes who would rather lose the war than have labor and the Negro people win democracy. In the pre-war days, when the conflict between capital and labor overshadowed everything else, it is easy to understand why the tycoons of finance and industry regarded these gentlemen with affectionate eyes. But today, when representatives of management sit with representatives of the CIO and AFL in the War Labor Board, when in many cases they collaborate to increase production in the factories, Cox, Smith, Hoffman, and their ilk are costly anachronisms that jeopardize the interests not only of the common people, but of the majority of the capitalists themselves. It is obvious that a situation in which two key posts, the chairmanship of the Senate Military Affairs and Naval Affairs Committees, are held by appeasers, Senators Reynolds and Walsh, is definitely dangerous to the country. But no less dangerous is continued acceptance of leadership from men like Dies, Smith, Byrd and Tydings. President Roosevelt has indicated his desire for the election of a different kind of Congress, composed of men who, regardless of party, can be counted on to support the government. And Wendell Willkie has seconded the motion. There are already such men in both houses—high honors go particularly to Representatives Marcantonio and Eliot who led the fight against Dies. They and others like them constitute a nucleus for a much needed job of political retooling. America must have a victory Congress, imbued with a sense of the grandeur of this war, with a total devotion to its objectives and a passion for democracy. November is not too far off to start thinking and planning in terms of a united political offensive, with the labor movement as the spearhead, to elect that kind of Congress.

A. B. MAGILL.



L'ATTAQUE, TOUJOURS, L'ATTAQUE

The offensives that can win the war. Potential invasion points in Europe. The opinions of Lieut.-Col. W. F. Kernan and Major George F. Eliot.

IT IS quite clear that Hitler's military block forged into a temporarily homogeneous entity can be cracked only by an equally mighty hammer and anvil. The hammer alone may deliver devastating blows, but if there is no anvil, the block will simply be imbedded deeper into the soft soil but not destroyed.

The Red Army and the Soviet Union's material and moral might are the hammer. The Allies—Britain and the United States principally—must provide the anvil. But an anvil which is not passive. An anvil which comes up to meet the blow of the hammer.

In other words, Germany must be made to fight on two fronts. The second front must be a real one, not a front of a few divisions as in Libya. And it must be established in Europe, not somewhere in the colonies or semi-colonies. The great blow must be directed at the monstrosity's lair, not at one of the ramifications of its subterranean tunnels. This is the fundamental *grand strategy* the Allies must adopt if they, and humanity in general, are to live and develop in the next generations.

IN THIS conviction we are happily not alone. Thank heaven for the fact that in times when the press is cluttered with the drivel of the Baldwins, Pratts, Limpuses, and such keyboard soldiers, two men who are real soldiers have spoken up.

We mean Lieut.-Col. W. F. Kernan and Major George Fielding Eliot. The former has written a book, *Defense Will Not Win the War*. The latter has written an article in *Look* which is prophetically called "Our Coming Invasion of Europe." Kernan's book has great qualities and small defects. Its chief virtue lies in its direct, insistent, and forceful advocacy of an Allied Front in Europe. He says: "... the only hope for the Axis is in the chance that America, having persistently and stubbornly followed the wrong road for the last twenty years, will be unable to recognize the right road until it is too late to take it. So if we turn away from Japan, and towards Europe, with our armed might, Hitler is already defeated. If we move in time, he will be as pegged out, as staked down, as helpless

to prevent an American offensive in Italy as England was to prevent the German attack in the Balkans."

Kernan, the soldier-philosopher, is direct and definite in his demands, but less so in his practical advice for the execution of his grand strategic plans. Maybe it is the philosopher who interferes a bit with the soldier. The book is a grand indictment of the "appeasers" in politics and the "defenders" in strategy. Kernan seems to have tacked over his desk Marshal Foch's famous: "*L'attaque, toujours, l'attaque!*" But in his offensive zeal, Kernan sometimes violates history. He often takes facts out of their time-setting and attending circumstances. Such, for example, is his indictment of Mahan's naval theory (the doctrine of supremacy of sea power) as wrong, without regard to the fact that it was evolved before the appearance of truly mass armies on the strategic checkerboard and of air power in the realm of tactics.

A few cases of lifting history out of "context," an incomplete understanding and oversight of Red Army strategy, the deification of Foch, and a straight-faced attitude toward such a traitor as Maxime Weygand—these are among the weaknesses of Kernan's book. Only too often is the soldier-realist concealed by the metaphysical smoke-screen of the idealist philosopher. But all this does not in the least detract from the great merit of a book which sounds like a trumpet call of "Boots and Saddles."

An earnest student of military affairs, and a real soldier (with whom this writer often disagrees, but whose opinions he respects), Major George Fielding Eliot has provided the badly needed *mise au point* of Lieutenant-Colonel Kernan's thesis. Kernan calls upon us to invade Europe in the general direction of Italy. He does not elaborate apart from the optimistic statement that 200,000 men as a starter would be enough, with a monthly ration of 200,000 more.

Major Eliot soberly and competently proceeds to explain in the simplest language how invasions are prepared and executed. Then he points out several possible routes. The lucidity of Eliot's thinking is manifest in the fact that he always thinks of *both hammer and anvil*, instead of forgetting the Soviet hammer and stressing only the Anglo-American anvil as Kernan does. Major Eliot says: "Can they (the Nazis) be attacked? Can they be beaten? The Russians have proved they can be. British and Americans can do the same." Again: "All we can do in this line (i.e. of invasion) will have to be coordinated with the Russians. We must give them the greatest help possible both in direct aid and in creating diversions." This is absolutely correct, even from a strictly professional military viewpoint.

From here on Major Eliot proceeds to evaluate five major avenues of possible attack: Scandinavia, Brittany-Normandy, Spain, Italy, and the Balkans. The three former directions lie across the open Atlantic lanes which, although infested by Axis submarines and partly patrolled by their aircraft, still are essentially wide open. The two latter directions are ensconced in the lands locking the Mediterranean.

Norway has few airdromes because of the nature of its terrain, and such as there are, are closely and powerfully guarded by the Germans. A Norwegian offensive would therefore be a hazardous operation. Any attempt here, while possible, would be followed by the *Gleichschaltung* of Sweden by Hitler. Major