

IN WASHINGTON

HOW READY ARE WE TO FIGHT THE REDS?

The people of the United States are apparently overwhelmingly in support of any action by the government which will control Communist activities in this country and check aggressive expansion by Soviet Russia throughout the world.

With this idea in mind, the public will support the action of Congress in passing a Communist-espionage-sabotage control bill over the veto of President Truman and the congressional proposal to shut off financial and economic aid to nations that ship potential war materials to the Soviet Union and its satellites.

The test of this legislation, however, is not the declaration of purpose outlined in debate or described in textual preamble. It is the effectiveness of enforcement after the legislation is passed. There is considerable difference of opinion as to the workability of this legislation, indicated by the action of the President in vetoing the bill submitted by Congress.

We are not concerned with either of the legislative matters referred to because, after all, if enforceable, they may do some good and if unenforceable, may do little harm. The danger that arises, however, is that the public, despite its firm intention to oppose Communism and Soviet aggression, may conclude that much more has been accomplished than the future will disclose. Consequently, there is the danger that an aroused public opinion may sit back and take it for granted that the menace of Communist aggression has been adequately cared for.

In this frame of mind, the people are apt to overlook the importance of universal military training to strengthen the national defense. Despite the high-sounding declarations that accompanied debate on the two measures, the only sensible preparation for stopping Communist aggression is to be prepared to use force. Without universal military training, one may doubt whether this country will ever have an adequate number of trained men, ready to fight for individual freedom and to block Soviet aggression.

Speaking after his appointment as Secretary of Defense, General of the Army George C. Marshall pointed out that, after World War I, a bill was introduced in Congress to provide for universal military training. Of course, the bill did not pass but General Marshall expresses the opinion that if Congress had enacted the proposal, Hitler would not have dared to provoke a second World War and the present menace of a third war conflict would have been averted.

If the people of this country are in earnest in their declarations against Communism, they will demand that

the country follow the advice submitted to the first Congress in 1790 by President George Washington. He gave a plan for complete national defense based on the principle that in a self-governing republic, every able-bodied young man should be trained to defend his country. The advice of General Washington was not followed but, if it had been acted upon by Congress, the chances are that the country would have been prepared to meet every military emergency that has confronted us in our subsequent history.

It might be interesting to call attention to the statements made by General Marshall in connection with national defense since 1920. When Congress passed a National Defense Act, omitting the proposal for universal military training, it was a marked improvement over the policy followed previous to World War I. The law authorized a standing army of 280,000 men and provided for an elaborate Reserve Officers Training Corps system in colleges and universities and instruction and training in the National Guard.

General Marshall then points out that this was "reasonably sound action" except as to universal military training. It was based upon long hearings, held when memories were fresh with the experience of the terrible war, and it appeared that the nation might, at last, take a long step forward in the matter of preparedness for defense.

Some nine months later, however, Congress was confronted with the political problem of the national budget and an increase in taxation to support its defense program. What happened? Congress cut appropriations, making necessary a reduction of the Army from 280,000 to 185,000. Eight months later, the Army's strength was cut to 150,000 and still later to 125,000. The program of training was continued and the Army had to assign some of its officer personnel to this task which meant its combat effectiveness was decreased.

Continuing his recital of comparatively recent developments, General Marshall pointed out that the movement to build up an air force resulted in the recommendation of the Newton D. Baker Committee. No provision was made, however, for the personnel of the Air Force and the result was that infantry, artillery, the tank corps and our higher elements were depleted. By 1933 "there literally was no ground force worthy of the name of the Army."

The extent of the emasculation is to be understood from an example cited by General Marshall. A regiment was ordered to move about twelve hundred miles in order to consolidate commands. There was no money for transportation, so it marched, "with its dwindling companies." It lost several units before it was half way its destination and when it reached the new post "the entire regiment was elimi-

nated." This was pretty much the picture of the ground forces of the Army when General Marshall arrived in Washington in 1938.

General Marshall points out that, "despite what most people said, the Congress and the people had not learned their lesson from the first World War." And, "what is more important, again after 1945 and 1946, we demonstrated that we still had not learned our lesson despite another catastrophic World War."

This brings us to the observation with which we started this rather long discussion. Have the people of the United States, in the light of events of the last year, made up their minds to adequately prepare for self-defense?

Is the public prepared for the personal and financial sacrifices that will be necessary to adequately prepare?

Or, will we be satisfied with a few pieces of legislation which, despite their declared purposes, do little more than create the impression that something big has taken place in connection with our well-nigh unanimous decision to oppose Communism and Soviet aggression?

Right

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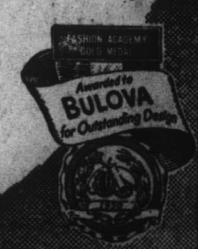
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